# BRITISH GEORGICS.

# BRITISH GEORGICS:

BY

JAMES GRAHAME.

*Divini gloria ruris.*

EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

FOR JOHN BALLANTYNE AND CO. AND BROWN AND CROMBIE, EDINBURGH; AND LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, AND JOHN MURRAY, LONDON.

1809.

PR3499
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1809

# PREFACE.

In the following Poem, I have not attempted to exhibit a *system* of husbandry. I have aimed not so much to instruct as to amuse; not to teach a science, but to recommend the study of it. As intimately connected with that study, and as a subject of infinite importance in itself, I have pointed my view more or less directly to the situation and manners of the peasantry. It is my wish to draw the attention of landed proprietors to that most important class of the community, and to persuade them, that the welfare of the country depends in

a great measure on preserving the cultivators of the soil in that relative state of respectability, comfort, and consequence, which they have hitherto held, but which the fashionable system of agriculture has an evident tendency to destroy. In this view, though I am no friend to *idleness*, I am humbly of opinion that innocent recreations ought to be encouraged; that festivals, holidays, customary sports, and every institution which adds an hour of importance, or of harmless enjoyment, to the poor man's heart, ought to be religiously observed.

Descriptions, therefore, of old customs, some of them unhappily on the wane, I conceived might be useful, as tending not only to preserve their remembrance, but even perhaps to retard the rapidity of their decline. But while I say that such was my aim, I am far from arrogating to myself

the merit of having succeeded in that aim. To draw a picture of rural life, so truly, and at the same time so pleasingly, as to render the original an object of higher interest than it was before, is no easy task. The merit to which I lay claim is that merely of fidelity.

If the *title* which I have chosen should be deemed an assuming one, I beg leave to observe, that the word *Georgics*, though the title of the most beautiful and complete of Virgil's works, is as much the appropriate term for a poem on husbandry, as the word Tragedy is for a particular species of dramatic composition.

In having chosen a *theme* that has been illustrated by the genius of Virgil, I trust I shall be acquitted of temerity, when it is considered that

the British isles differ in so many respects from the countries to which Virgil's Georgics alluded ;----in soil, climate, and productions, in men and manners, that the art of *agriculture*, in reference to the one, may well be considered as quite a different subject from what it is in reference to the other.

That I have been preceded by Thomson, is a consideration of a more serious kind. He, no doubt, with a genius and felicity which none of his followers need ever hope to equal, has described many of the most striking appearances of Nature, and many of the most poetical processes, so to speak, of husbandry. But though he has reaped, why may not others be permitted to glean?

On the topics of that faithful and amiable painter of rustic life, Bloomfield, I have rarely encroach-

ed; his allusions refer to a district of the island, and to appearances and customs, very different from those which I have had in my eye. My allusions relate chiefly to Scotland, to Scottish husbandry, scenery, and manners. At the same time, I will venture to say, that the modes of cultivation which I recommend are not, strictly speaking, *local*. That the scenery and manners *are local*, or rather *national*, is true; but the rules of agricultural improvement which I have inculcated, whether by description or direct precept, are equally suitable to both divisions of the island. It may here be remarked, that the crops, in many districts north of the Tweed, are at least equal to any that England can boast of; and that, in truth, Scotland has found a compensation for the inferiority of her soil and climate, in the skill and enterprise of her husbandmen.

That I am not a practical farmer, is a circumstance which must, no doubt, derogate from my authority as a writer on agriculture, and may even perhaps draw on my present attempt the imputation of presumption. In my justification, I would observe, that though I have never *practised* the business, I have studied it, both by much actual observation, and some reading. From my infancy, I have in general passed near the half, sometimes a greater portion of the year, in the country. To the appearances of Nature, and the operations of Agriculture, my attention, though without any particular aim, was long directed; and of late years I have been stimulated to diligence and accuracy of observation, partly with a view to my present undertaking, and partly by a half-formed intention which I at different periods have har-

boured, of devoting a portion of my time to the business of husbandry.

On the abuse of Notes much has of late been said, and justly said, both by critics and readers. With respect to the notes, which compose the concluding part of this volume, I can safely say, that, in adding them, I have been induced, by a firm conviction that they would form a useful supplement to the poetical part of the work. In a composition partly didactic, it is often impossible to reconcile minuteness and precision with poetry. And even with regard to those topics, on which I have somewhat enlarged, explanation appeared not to be superfluous. My deficiency, too, of *professional authority*, seemed to require a frequent reference to authors, who united practical to theoretical knowledge. When to these considerations is

added this,—that allusions to manners and customs are, of all others, those which most generally require illustration, and that the manners and customs, which are the subjects either of allusion or of description in the following poem, are many of them peculiar to one only of the united kingdoms, I trust that, in the judgment of every candid reader, I shall be acquitted of having practised the unworthy device of increasing the bulk without adding to the value of my work.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## January.

*All Nature feels the renovating force*
*Of Winter, only to the thoughtless eye*
*In ruin seen. The frost-concocted glebe*
*Draws in abundant vegetable soul,*
*And gathers vigour for the coming year.*

THOMSON.

## ARGUMENT.

*Short sketch of the subject.—Shortness of the day—Address to Night—Morning of the first day of the year—Cessation of labour—Conviviality and joy of the day—Some labours cannot be delayed—Feeding cattle and sheep—Examine fences—Shelter derived from fences—Improvement of climate from fences—Hedges preferable in this respect to walls—Illustration of this—Objection to hedges and belts answered—A heavier fall of snow—Morning—Threshers—Storm of snow—Shepherd out with his flock in the night—Snow scene in clear weather—Driving manure and lime—Care of horses—Bedding—Suppering—Hen-roost—Foumart—A serene morning and day—Effects of sun on sheltered spots—Ice scenes—Bonspiel between rival districts.—Cottage fireside scene in the evening—Reading—This scene not fictitious in Scotland—Parish schools—Appeal on the advantages of public instruction—Remonstrance with those who lately opposed the principle of parish schools in England.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## January.

The labours of the plough, the various toils
That, still returning with the changeful year,
Demand the husbandman's and cottar's[1] care;
The joys and troubles of the peasant's life;
His days and nights of festive mirth, that serve,
Though few, yet long foreseen, remembered long,
To lighten every task; his rural sports
Afield, at home; the fickle season's signs;
The varying face of nature, wood, and stream,
And sky, and fruitful field,—these now I sing.

[1] Cottager.

The wintry sun shoots forth a feeble glimpse,
Then yields his short-lived empire to the night.
Hail, Night! pavilioned 'neath the rayless cope,
I love thy solemn state, profoundly dark;
Thy sable pall; thy lurid throne of clouds,
Viewless save by the lightning's flash; thy crown,
That boasts no starry gem; thy various voice,
That to the heart, with eloquence divine,
Now in soft whispers, now in thunder speaks.
Not undelightful is thy reign to him
Who wakeful gilds, with reveries bright, thy gloom,
Or listens to the music of the storm,
And meditates on Him who sways its course:
Thy solemn state I love, yet joyful greet
The long-expected dawn's ambiguous light,
That faintly pencils out the horizon's verge.

Long ere the lingering dawn of that blithe morn

Which ushers in the year, the roosting cock,
Flapping his wings, repeats his larum shrill;
But on that morn no busy flail obeys
His rousing call; no sounds but sounds of joy
Salute the year,—the first-foot's[1] entering step,
That sudden on the floor is welcome heard,
Ere blushing maids have braided up their hair;
The laugh, the hearty kiss, the *good new year*
Pronounced with honest warmth. In village, grange,
And burrow town, the steaming flaggon, borne
From house to house, elates the poor man's heart,
And makes him feel that life has still its joys.
The aged and the young, man, woman, child,
Unite in social glee; even stranger dogs,
Meeting with bristling back, soon lay aside
Their snarling aspect, and in sportive chace,

[1] The first visitant who enters a house on new-year's-day is called the *first-foot*.

Excursive scour, or wallow in the snow.
With sober cheerfulness, the grandam eyes
Her offspring round her, all in health and peace;
And, thankful that she's spared to see this day
Return once more, breathes low a secret prayer,
That God would shed a blessing on their heads.

Thus morning passes, till, far south, the sun
Shines dimly through the drift, and warning gives,
That all the day must not be idly spent.
Some works brook not delay; the stake, the stall,
And fold, at this rough season, most demand
Assiduous care; the sheep-rack must be filled
With liberal arms, and, from the turnip field,
A plenteous load should spread the boulted snow;
While winterers, by hedge or bush that cowr,
Expect their wonted sheaf.

Throughout this month
Much it imports your fences to survey;
For oft the heifers, tempted by the view
Of some green spot, where springs ooze out, and thaw
The falling flakes as fast as they alight,
Bound o'er the hedge; or at neglected gaps
Burst scrambling through, and widen every breach.
A stake put timely in, or whinny bush,
Until the season come when living plants
May fill the vacant space, much harm prevents.

Some husbandmen deem fences only formed
To guard their fields from trespass of their own
Or neighbours' herd or flock; and lightly prize
The benefits immense which shelter brings.
Mark how, within the shelter of a hedge,
The daisy, long ere winter quits the plain,
Opens its yellow bosom to the sun.

A hedge full grown, if with a hedge-row joined,
Or circling belt, the climate of your field
Improves, transmutes from bleak and shivering cold
To genial warmth: no graduated scale
Is needed to demonstrate this plain truth,
Obvious as true; for there a vivid green
Tinges your early sward, there lingers long
When winter winds have blanched the neighbouring lea.

Some fences tend but little to abate
The biting cold;—the wall, unless around
A narrow field, or raised of towering height,
But small degree of sheltering warmth affords.
It is by artificial calm that fields
Are warmed; and walls but slightly check
The sweeping blast. The liquid air is ruled
By laws analagous to those which sway

The watery element:—See how a stream
Surmounts obstructing rocks, or crossing dams,
Seeming as if resistance gave new force;
But, if obstructed by a fallen tree,
Or dipping branch, smoothly it glides along
In gentler course, and dimples as it flows;
So through the pervious check of spray and twig,
The blast, impeded in its course, not turned,
Slackens its boisterous speed, and sighs along the vale.

Whoe'er delights in sheltered winter walks,
Or garden well protected from the blight
Of nipping winds, should cultivate the beech.
Quickly it grows, and through the year retains
Its foliage: withered though it be, yet warm,
Its very rustle warms the wint'ry blast.

List not to him, who says that sheltered fields
Suffer from lack of air; that corn once lodged
Is lost, if not exposed to every breeze.
True wisdom oft consists but in a choice
Of ills; and, if sometimes luxuriant crops
Are injured by an atmosphere confined,
Far oftener are they in their early stage
Protected thus from pelting rains, which else
Lay bare the roots, and save, I ween, all risque
Of growth luxuriant, or of prostrate stalks.

Now broadened, blinding flakes, by day, by night,
In thickening showers descend, and oft, ere morn,
The crow of chanticleer, obtusely heard,
Announces that a deeper fall has thatched
His chinky roof; the doors are half blocked up;
From house to barn the path deep buried lies;
And, nigh waist-deep sinking, the threshers wade

To ply their early task. Cheerful the sound
Of double strokes, ceasing but till the sheaf
Be turned, or new one loosed: but sorrowful
The sound of single flail; it tells that peace
Is not within our gates.

All out-door work
Now stands; the waggoner, with wisp-wound feet,
And wheelspokes almost filled, his destined stage
Scarcely can gain. O'er hill, and vale, and wood,
Sweeps the snow-pinioned blast, and all things veils
In white array, disguising to the view
Objects well known, now faintly recognized.
One colour clothes the mountain and the plain,
Save where the feathery flakes melt as they fall
Upon the deep blue stream, or scowling lake;
Or where some beetling rock o'erjutting hangs
Above the vaulty precipice's cove.

Formless, the pointed cairn now scarce o'ertops
The level dreary waste; and coppice woods,
Diminished of their height, like bushes seem.
With stooping heads, turned from the storm, the flocks,
Onward still urged by man and dog, escape
The smothering drift, while, skulking at a side,
Is seen the fox, with close down-folded tail,
Watching his time to seize a straggling prey;
Or from some lofty crag he ominous howls,
And makes approaching night more dismal fall.

But not with night's approach the shepherd's toils
Are ended; through the deep and dreary glooms,
Without one guiding star, he struggling wades
The rising wreath; till, quite o'erspent, compelled
To leave his flock to time and chance, he turns
Homeward his weary and uncertain steps,

Much doubting of his way, foreboding much.
In vain he tries to find his wonted marks,—
The hill-side fountain, with its little plat
Of verdant sward around; the well-known cairn;
The blasted branchless oak; the ancient stone
Where murdered martyrs fell, and where they lie:
In vain he lists to hear the rushing stream,
Whose winding course would lead him to his home.
O'ercome at last, yielding to treacherous rest,
He sits him down, and folds within his plaid,
In fond embrace, the sharer of his toils,
The partner of his childrens' infant sports.
His children! thought of them wakes new resolves
To make one last despairing effort more.
Meanwhile they, crouching round the blazing hearth,
Oft ask their mother when he will return.
She on her rocking infant looks the while,
Or, starting, thinks she hears the lifted latch;

And oft the drift comes sweeping o'er the floor,
While anxiously she looks into the storm,
Returning soon to stir the dying brands,
That with their blaze her sinking hopes revive:
Alas, her hopes are transient as that blaze,
And direful images her fancy crowd,—
The dog returning masterless; the search
By friends and kinsmen wandering far o'er moss
And moor; the sad success,—his body found
Half buried in a wreath; the opening door
To let the bearers in!...The door *is* opened:
Shook from poor Yarrow's fur, a sleety mist
Is scattered round, and *in* his master steps.
What joy! what silent tearful joy pervades
The late despairing groupe! Round him they cling;
One doffs his stiffened plaid, and one his shoes;
Kneeling, one chafes his hands and feet benumbed:
The sleeping babe is roused to kiss its sire,

Restored past hope; and supper, long forgot,
Crowns the glad board: Nor is their evening prayer
This night omitted; fervent, full of thanks,
From glowing hearts in artless phrase it flows!
Then, simply chaunted by the parent pair,
And by the lisping choir, the song of praise,
Beneath the heath-roofed cottage in the wild,
Ascends more grateful to the heavenly throne,
Than pealing diapason, and the loud
Swelling acclaim of notes by art attuned.

But clearer skies succeed; the downy fall
No longer dims the welkin, and, low poised,
The sun gleams slanting o'er the beauteous waste
Of snow, here smoothing o'er each bosky bourne,
Or heaved into a mimic moveless wave,
There drifted up against some cottage wall,
In easy slope uniting with the roof.

How dazzling white the illimitable glare!
With ruby-tinted beams twinkling, till aches
The wearied eye, that vainly seeks to find
A resting place, compelled at last to close.

Soon as, by frequent hoof and wheel, the roads
A beaten path afford, 'tis time to yoke
The rested team, and, from the neighbouring town,
To drive the well-heaped loads of rich manure;
Or, from the smoke-enveloped kilns, bring home
The fertilizing stone. Now compost mounds
Ought from their snowy covering to be cleared,
To feel the powerful influence of the frost.

But chiefly, in this rigorous month, attend
To keep the team in order for the field:
Unyoke betimes, whatever be the task,

And house them ere the disappearing sun
Shoot, as he sinks, a feeble parting glimpse.
Then see their nightly lair[1] be warm and clean,
Of well-dried fern or straw; this profits more
Than half their food; nor is it wasteful care:
For thus, 'gainst spring's return, the strutting cock,
Proud of his height upon your reeking pile,
Tells, as he crows, of early thriving brairds.[2]

How pleasant when the smoking cribs are filled,
Closing the door, to turn, with listening ear,
And hearken to the sound of busy mouths;
Then, with an upward gaze, to wander o'er
The starry host, and think that He, who rolls

[1] Repeatedly used by Dryden in this sense.
[2] Grain-crop in its early stage.

Yon spheres innumerable, deigns to feed
Both man and beast, and all the fowls of heaven.

O nightly miracle! to me still new,
Though long beheld: O soul-elating sight!
Stupendous record, witnessing to man
A ruling power, almighty and benign.

Be not forgot, amid your evening cares,
To see that all be safe beneath the roof,
Where snugly, with his dames, sits chanticleer.
Each hole shut up, then every part explore,
Lest, ambushed in a corner, couches sly
The thirsty foumart, by his eyes betrayed,
That, glaring from some darksome nook, outshine
Your glimmering lamp:—with tiptoe step glide out;
Up from the fireside rouse your sleeping cur;
Haste then, not weaponless, and, followed close

By man and boy, all eager for the sport,
Rush in, and, if the fell destroyer 'scape
Your hurried ill-aimed strokes, Luath, more cool,
Will seize him fast, and lay him at your feet:
A deed remembered long on winter nights,
When scarce a fragment of the trophied scalp,
Grinning, remains to grace your stable-door.

Ruddy is now the dawning as in June,
And clear and blue the vault of noon-tide sky:
Nor is the slanting orb of day unfelt.
From sunward rocks, the icicle's faint drop,
By lonely river-side, is heard at times
To break the silence deep; for now the stream
Is mute, or faintly gurgles far below
Its frozen ceiling: silent stands the mill,
The wheel immoveable, and shod with ice.
The babbling rivulet, at each little slope,

Flows scantily beneath a lucid veil,
And seems a pearly current liquified;
While, at the shelvy side, in thousand shapes
Fantastical, the frostwork domes uprear
Their tiny fabrics, gorgeously superb
With ornaments beyond the reach of art:
Here vestibules of state, and colonnades;
There Gothic castles, grottos, heathen fanes,
Rise in review, and quickly disappear;
Or through some fairy palace fancy roves,
And studs, with ruby lamps, the fretted roof;
Or paints with every colour of the bow
Spotless parterres, all freakt with snow-white flowers,
Flowers that no archetype in nature own;
Or spreads the spiky crystals into fields
Of bearded grain, rustling in autumn breeze.

Upon the river's brink the schoolboy stands,

And, hesitating, eyes the clear expanse
Of solid water. First, a stone he throws,—
It o'er the elastic surface, ringing, bounds
With frequent leap, then smoothly glides along;
Cautious he forward steps, starting dismayed,
To hear, as if a rent struck upward far,
And see beneath his foot the dialled ice.
Fear not, poor elf; but venturing enjoy
Thy harmless pastime: yielding ice is strong,
And safer still as farther from the shore.
Or, heedful of the fond parental fears,
Wait patient till another starry night
Has, in that frozen mirror-plate, beheld
Another galaxy inverted shine.
'Tis then deep shoots the penetrating power,
Compacting hard, o'er brook and river wide,
A seamless pavement, luculent yet strong.

But chiefly is the power of frost displayed
Upon the lake's crystalline broad expanse,
Wherein the whole reflected hemisphere
Majestically glows, and the full sweep,
From pole to pole, of shooting star is seen:
Or when the noon-day sun illumes the scene,
And mountain hoar, tree, bush, and margin reed,
Are imaged in the deep. At such a time,
How beautiful, O Duddingston! thy smooth
And dazzling gleam, o'er which the skaiter skims
From side to side, leaning with easy bend,
And motion fleet, yet graceful: wheeling now
In many a curve fantastic; forward now,
Without apparent impulse, shooting swift,
And thridding, with unerring aim, the throng
That all around enjoy the mazy sport:
Dunedin's nymphs the while the season brave,
And, every charm enhanced,--the blooming cheek,

The eye beaming delight, the breathing lips
Like rosebuds wreathed in mist,—the nameless grace
Of beauty venturing on the slippery path,—
Heighten the joy, and make stern winter smile.
Scared from her reedy citadel, the swan,
Beneath whose breast, when summer gales blew soft,
The water lily dipped its lovely flower,
Spreads her broad pinions mounting to the sky,
Then stretches o'er Craigmillar's ruined towers,
And seeks some lonely lake remote from man.

Now rival parishes, and shrievedoms, keep,
On upland lochs, the long-expected tryst[1]
To play their yearly bonspiel.[2] Aged men,
Smit with the eagerness of youth, are there,
While love of conquest lights their beamless eyes,

[1] Appointment.

[2] A match at the game of *curling* on the ice.

New-nerves their arms, and makes them young
once more.

The sides when ranged, the distance meted out,
And duly traced the tees,[1] some younger hand
Begins, with throbbing heart, and far o'ershoots,
Or sideward leaves, the mark: in vain he bends
His waist, and winds his hand, as if it still
Retained the power to guide the devious stone,
Which, onward hurling, makes the circling groupe
Quick start aside, to shun its reckless force.
But more and still more skilful arms succeed,
And near and nearer still around the tee,
This side, now that, approaches; till at last,
Two seeming equidistant, straws or twigs
Decide as umpires 'tween contending coits.[2]

[1] The marks.

[2] In some parts of Scotland, the stones with which *curlers* play are called *cooting*, or *coiting stones*.

Keen, keener still, as life itself were staked,
Kindles the friendly strife: one points the line
To him who, poising, aims and aims again;
Another runs and sweeps where nothing lies.
Success alternately, from side to side,
Changes; and quick the hours un-noted fly,
Till light begins to fail, and deep below,
The player, as he stoops to lift his coit,
Sees, half incredulous, the rising moon.
But now the final, the decisive spell,
Begins; near and more near the sounding stones,
Some winding in, some bearing straight along,
Crowd justling all around the mark, while one,
Just slightly touching, victory depends
Upon the final aim: long swings the stone,
Then with full force, careering furious on,
Rattling it strikes aside both friend and foe,
Maintains its course, and takes the victor's place.

The social meal succeeds, and social glass;
In words the fight renewed is fought again,
While festive mirth forgets the winged hours.---
Some quit betimes the scene, and find that home
Is still the place where genuine pleasure dwells.

Dear to the peasant's heart his fire-side blaze,
And floor new swept to greet his glad return!
And dear the welcome of his child, and dog
Fawning to share his favour, still bestowed
Upon the climbing infant: sweet meanwhile,
His only guest, the redbreast, wakened, trills
A summer carol short, then 'neath his wing,
In trust implicit, veils his little head.
May be some ancient volume read aloud
Fixes the listening groupe; perhaps the deeds
Of Wallace are the theme,—rude though the strain,
And mingling false with true, relished by all

Who Scotland love,---who liberty adore.
Hope, fear, and joy, alternate paint each face,
As fluctuates the fortune of the chief:
Or terror, all unmingled, sways the breast,
And shakes the frame, when Fawdon's ghost appears.
Perhaps the godly lives, the fearless deaths
Triumphant, of the men who, on the field,
Or not less honourable scaffold, fell,
Asserting Freedom and Religion's cause,
Arouse each generous feeling of the soul;
Or Ramsay's page pourtrays the rural life
In all the grace of truth; or Burns calls forth
Each passion at his will; then, with a smile,
A beauteous winning smile of Nature's face,
Soothes their full storm into a gentle calm.

This is no tale which fabling poet dreams,
No fancied picture of some former age

When truth, and plain though useful knowledge dwelt
With virtue, pure religion, simple joy,
And innocence, beneath the rustic roof:
No, 'tis a faithful portrait, unadorned,
Of manners lingering yet in Scotia's vales.
Still there, beside the church-yard path, is heard,
From lowly dwelling, rise the noise confused
Of many tongues, of some who con, or seem
To con with look intent, their little task;
There, still the village master and the priest
Unite to spread instruction o'er the land.
And let not him who ploughs a wide domain
Ask, with contemptuous sneer, what *that* avails
In making fruitful fields? Are fields alone
Worthy the culture of a fostering state!
What is a country rich in waving grain,
In sweeping herds and flocks, barren of men,
Or, fruitful of a race degenerate, sunk

In gloomy ignorance, without a ray
Of useful, or of pleasing lore, to cheer
The listless hours, when labour folds his arms?
What heart so base, so sordid, as engross,
Not only all the luxuries and joys
Which affluence can minister to man,
But would, from common use, lock up the fount
Of knowledge pure, lest men should be too wise!
What sacrilegious tongue dare to arraign
The glorious work, by which the sacred page
Was patent made to every eye that looks
Upon the light of heaven, and blesses God
That yet a brighter light illumes his soul!
Who dares, with brow of adamant, maintain,
That Britain's sons, who sent him to defend
Their rights,—whose delegated voice derives
Its power from them,—dares, with a cynic jest,
Deny the right of Englishmen to read!

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## February.

*———Sudden from the hills,*
*O'er rocks and woods, in broad brown cataracts,*
*A thousand snow-fed torrents shoot at once.*

THOMSON.

## ARGUMENT.

*Mountain snows dissolving—River ice breaking—Signs of Spring's approach—Ploughing—Cultivation of waste land—Contrast between waste land and the same land in an improved state—Compost—Spreading manure in time of frost—Use of the brake in stiff soils—Farther signs of Spring—Lark—Crocus—Bees—Feeding of bees—Cultivation of willows—Use of the willow tribes in defending the banks of rivers—Various other uses—Description of the inmates of a Blind Asylum—Of a French captive.*

## February.

The long-piled mountain-snows at last dissolve,
Bursting the roaring river's brittle bonds.
Ponderous the fragments down the cataract shoot,
And, buried in the boiling gulph below,
Emerging, re-appear, then roll along,
Tracing their height upon the half-sunk trees.
But slower, by degrees, the obstructed wave
Accumulated, crashing, scarcely seems
To move, pausing at times, until, upheaved
In masses huge, the lower sheet gives way.

Bleak still, and winterly, o'er hill and dale
Is nature's aspect: yet some pleasing signs,
Some heart-reviving preludes, faint and few,
Of Spring's sweet season, meet the eye or ear.
When calm the eve, I've heard the partridge call,
And seen the pairing couple as they tripped
Athwart the wreaths that in the furrows lurk:
And even the rere-mouse, when the twilight sleeps,
Unbreathing, spreads her torpid wings, and round
From stack to house or barn, and round again,
With many a sudden turn, flits and eludes
The eye. Than these no surer signs presage
An early seed-time, and an early braird.

And now, when sun and wind have dried the fields,
'Tis time to clear your ploughshare in the glebe.
If deep you wish to go, or if the soil
Be stiff and hard, or not yet cleared of stones,

The Scottish plough, drawn by a team four strong,
Your purpose best will suit; quick it divides
The tumbling mould, while, whistling as he drives,
The merry plough-boy cheers the cold bleak day.
But if from nature, or from art, the soil
Be soft and friable, the smaller plough,
Drawn by one pair, obedient to the voice,
And double rein held by the ploughman's hand,
Moves right along, or winds as he directs.

But small degree of skill needs he, whose soil
Already by the plough has been subdued.
It is the old uncultivated waste,
Where yet the moor hen,[1] 'mid the bushy heath,
Her nest conceals; where hardy grass alone
Of coarsest kind, with ling or furze, afford
A scanty sustenance to flock or herd,—

[1] Female of the Gorcock.

'Tis chiefly there that judgment is required;
For there experience is as yet confined,
While wide the range of objects that demand
Discernment, in the choice of various means,
To make the desart blossom as the rose.

Some fail to cultivate their upland wilds,
Fearing the cold and bleakness of the clime
May baffle all attempts the soil to mend.
Fear not or cold or wet, if, lurking low,
The daisy's leaf is seen; or if the briar
Erect its prickly stems; or bramble stretch
Its shoots athwart your path, or clover blades,
Though small and close, around the sheep-fold spring.

Begin where fewest obstacles oppose:
Choose patches here and there, though small, nor
mind

The squaring of your fields. The sunny side
Of gentle slope is first to be preferred;
For there, if wet the soil, (unless a spring
Oozing, deep-seated, rear a plashy sward,)
'Tis easily laid dry; and there the Sun,
Great fertilizer! on the fallow mould
Strikes powerfully, when at his summer height,
With perpendicular ray. On such a spot
First draw a single furrow up and down,
Then, turning to the right two furrow breadths,
Lay up the mould to meet the former cut.
Proceeding thus, though only half the space
Hath felt the share, the glebe lies all exposed;
And thus on each side the inverted tilth,
A channel, smooth and firm at bottom, runs,
Bearing all surface water down the slope.
To dry and pulverize at once the soil,
No mode of tillage is more useful found,

Than this so simple. But the full effect
Is not obtained, unless the circling year
Upon your fallow ground its influence shed,—
The moody spring time's fitful heat and cold,
The summer's steady warmth, the autumn's winds
And drenching rains, with winter's frost and thaw.
These changes break the most obdurate soil,
And make it crumble to receive the air,
Breathing the breath of vegetable life.
Then with the plough again, and yet again,
Subdue it well, nor doubt a green crop, strong
And plentiful, your labours will reward.
When so prepared, profusely spread it o'er
With limestone crumbling into snowy dust.

But if, as oft befalls, a tilly soil
Derive but slight improvement from the plough,
And lime, though dealt with an unsparing hand,—

The river bed, where join the stream and pool,
Presents a cheap manure: or, if at hand
No current bickers o'er its pebbly bar,
Explore where with a gentle slope declines
The hill into the plain; there often lies
A gravelly layer, precious though little prized.
Sometimes a spring will point the place where lurks
A magazine immense: if sand appear
Around the source, be sure that underneath
A stratum more or less is to be found.
Or, if your soil be light, still to the brook
Or oozing springs resort. 'Tis there are found
Variety of earths; for every stream,
Whether it flow, broad gleaming in the sun,
A river fair; or, hidden from the view,
Mine its meandering course beneath the ground,
A little fount; each visits various soils,
Which to the bottom fall, or side are thrown.

Where haunts the woodcock, now about to wing
His way to colder climes, I've seen a spot
Of vivid green, beneath whose spongy sward
A store of richest mud lay broad and deep.
Bear then this truth in mind,—Where'er a spring
Or water runnel flows, there lies a mine,
If right applied, of meliorating earth,
Though cheap, not to be scorned; if pebbly sand,
To clay applied, it opens and resolves;
If clay or mud, compacts the gravelly soil.

But trust not wholly to manures bestowed
By nature's boon; for, though you thus may throw
A vivid verdure o'er the sterile waste,
The meliorated field, without manure
Supplied by herd or flock, relapses soon,
And heathy sprigs, with herbage coarse, and shoots
Of broom, or gorse, its former state betray.

Attempt not, then, on recent land to boast
Wide fields of waving grain; by slow degrees
Proceed; the broad-leaved plants at once reward
Your husbandry, and more improve the soil.
Nor long the time till, thoroughly reclaimed,
The new-gained crofts uninjured will sustain
Whate'er the oldest cultured lands produce.

By such resources so applied, I've seen,
As if it were, a new creation smile;
Have seen the clover, red and white, supplant
The purple heath-bell; rustling ears succeed
The dreary stillness of the lurid moor;
The glutted heifer lowing for the pail,
Where starving sheep picked up their scanty fare;
The sheltering hawthorn blossom, where the furze
Its rugged aspect reared; and I have heard,
Where melancholy plovers hovering screamed,

The partridge-call, at gloamin's lovely hour,
Far o'er the ridges break the tranquil hush;
And morning larks ascend with songs of joy,
Where erst the whinchat chirped from stone to stone.

What unalloyed delight to him whose hands
Performed the change, to wander o'er his mead
At setting sun, and think, This work is mine!
Or, looking down upon his hedge-row trees,
Anticipate the pleasure of their shade!
Not to himself, or scarcely to himself,
But to the sweet interrogating wight
Whom by the hand he leads! O happy lot!
Compared to his, who, pent in city lane,
Broods o'er his cyphered columns, casting up,
From time to time, the total of his pelf,
And grudging sore, that, in a few short years,
He and his treasure must for ever part.

The compost pile examine now and turn,
And, if 'tis not completely decomposed
Into one mass of vegetable mould,
With an unsparing hand throw in more lime.
When unremitting cold retards the stage
Of fermentation, heat, then, genial heat
Must be applied ; nor hesitate to use
A little casement sloping to the sun
Like garden hot-bed : covering but a part,
The process, once begun, pervades the whole.

If frost returning interrupt the plough,
Then is the time, along the hardened ridge,
To drive manure, and toss around the heaps,
O'er all the surface equally dispread,
Not scattered carelessly.

If stiff the soil,
The larger harrow, called by some the *brake*,
Will much avail: across, and yet across,
Drag it with team four strong, and raise a cloud
Of dust; then with the lesser harrow close,
Braying your soil till scarce a clod remain,
On which preluding lark may sit and sing.

How sweet, when winter's roughest mood is o'er,
The first note of the lark! How beautiful
The crocus shooting leafless through the ground
Its simple floweret, prized because it blows
The harbinger of Spring! To me more sweet
The first song of the lark, though briefly trilled,
Than all the summer music of the groves;
More beautiful to me the vernal bud,
Than all the odour-breathing flowers of May.

Sometimes, deceived by promise premature
Of Spring's approach, or pinched by empty combs,
Forth from the hive some straggling bees will peep,
And, buzzing on the outside of their porch,
Will try their wings, but not attempt to fly:
Here profit prompts, if pity ask in vain,
To save the falling state: Nor large the boon
They crave;---the refuse of the summer spoil,
Or syrup of the cane in bourtree[1] trough,
Pushed softly in, will help them till the down
Hang on the willow tree, than which no flower
Yields fruit more grateful to the frugal tribes.
Nor is there found a crop that yields increase
More sure, abundant, and at smaller charge,
Than does the willow grove; and now is come
The fittest time the limber slips to plant.
Choose well the spot: it is not every marsh,

[1] Elder.

Or boggy nook, will suit. Wherever springs,
Not deep, nor difficult to trace, ooze out,
Drenching the ground; and where, at little cost,
A large extent of field may be laid dry,
'Tis fitting there to draw the slanting drain,
And change the swamp into a grassy mead:
But where a head-spring long eludes the search,
And, though detected, as you ween, and led
In stony fetters, still breaks out, and spreads
A deep green patch amid your waving corn,
There yield to nature; there the willow plant.
It will not draw the water off, but change
The water into gold: it needs nor plough, manure,
Nor weeding hand: fair seasons, drowth, or rain,
Or cold,—to it all weather is alike.
A broad and open ditch drawn round the whole,
With here and there a trench transverse, will serve

At once for fence, and give a surface crust:
This all the culture that the willow seeks.

The bending willow loves itself to see
Reflected in the stream; there osier slips
Will thrive, and with reticulated roots
Will fortify your bank; let them not grow
To trees, but close and thick, that in the tangled wreck
Of winter-floods, the water-ouzel's nest
May find concealment from the schoolboy's eye.
A bank so shielded needs no other fence,
No stony bulwark, nor the wattled sod.
Compared to this, the alder's warping roots
Afford ambiguous aid; for on the stem,
Unyielding to the current, wintry floods
Impetuous bear, till, loosened by degrees,

The tree falls prone, and tears an open breach,
While harmlessly along the osiered bank
The swollen stream glides through the bending twigs,
Which feebly foil, and pliantly resist.

To name the uses of the willow tribes
Were endless task. The basket's various forms
For various purposes of household thrift;
The wicker chair of size and shape antique;
The rocking couch of sleeping infancy;
These, with unnumbered other forms and kinds,
Give bread to hands unfit for other work.
The man bowed down with age, the sickly youth,
The widowed mother with her little child,
That lends its aid and loves to be employed,
Find, from this easy toil, a help in need.

The blind man's blessing lights on him who plants
An osier bed: O I have seen a smile
Of mild content upon the assembled groupe
Of piteous visages, whose dexterous hands,
Taught by the public care, plied the light task;
And I have heard, their hour of labour done,
That simple, sacred strain, *By Babel's streams*,
Rise from the sightless band, with such a power
Of heart-dissolving melody,—move such a host
Of strong o'erwhelming feelings in the breast,
As wrung a tear from most obdurate eyes.

Once I beheld a captive, whom these wars
Had made an inmate of the prison-house,
Cheering with wicker-work, (that almost seemed
To him a sort of play,) his dreary hours.
I asked his story: in my native tongue,

(Long use had made it easy as his own,)
He answered thus:—Before these wars began,
I dwelt upon the willowy banks of Loire:
I married one who, from my boyish days,
Had been my playmate. One morn,—I'll ne'er for-
get!—
While busy chusing out the prettiest twigs,
To warp a cradle for our child unborn,
We heard the tidings, that the conscript-lot
Had fallen on me; it came like a death-knell.
The mother perished, but the babe survived;
And ere my parting day, his rocking couch
I made complete, and saw him sleeping smile,—
The smile that played upon the cheek of her
Who lay clay-cold. Alas! the hour soon came
That forced my fettered arms to quit my child;
And whether now he lives to deck with flowers

The sod upon his mother's grave, or lies
Beneath it by her side, I ne'er could learn:
I think he's gone, and now I only wish
For liberty and home, that I may see,
And stretch myself and die upon that grave.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## March.

*Now lav'rocks wake the merry morn*
*Aloft on dewy wing;*
*The merle, in his noon-tide bower,*
*Makes woodland echoes ring.*

BURNS.

## ARGUMENT.

*Ploughing—Larks—Rooks—Sea-fowl—Description of an old husbandman—Directions in agriculture by him, as to ploughing, rotation of crops, &c.—Sowing—Harrowing—Paring and burning—Apostrophe to Fire—Proposal for applying fire by means of a roller—Culture of cottar's garden and potatoe-plat—Hen and chickens—Bees—Spring flowers—Signs of good climate and soil.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## March.

Raised by the coming plough, the merry lark
Upsprings, and, soaring, joins the high-poised choirs
That carol far and near, in spiral flight
Some rising, some descending, some beyond
The visual ken, making the vaulted sky
One vast orchestra, full of joyful songs,
Of melodies, to which the heart of man,
Buoyant with praise, in unison responds.
If with the rooks, that on the ploughman's steps
Frequent alight, a flock of sea-fowl join,

Trust not the sky serene, but look for change;
Urge then your task, and let the sun go down
Upon your toil, nor loose the reeking yoke
Till in the east the rising stars appear.

A man I knew, bowed down with age and toil,
Who dwelt upon the pleasant banks of Clyde:
Deep-read he was in books, and was by some
A wizard deemed, because he would maintain,
That in the heavens the sun stood motionless,
And that the earth moved circling. He at eve,
When summer eves were long, would sit and mend
His horses gear, and teach me, glad to learn,
His rustic lore. "One ploughing (oft he'd say)
"Ere hoof-prints frozen white indent the ground,
"Is worth a score when winter frosts have ceased
"To penetrate the mould. Let then the plough
"The sickle follow soon; and when the fields

" Are bare, and mornings clear and calm
" Begin with hoar frost to encrust the sward,
" Plough down the whitened stubble, turning up
" The reeking tilth to feel the genial beam.
" 'Tis change from heat to cold, from cold to heat
" Alternating, that, more than tillage, breaks
" The obdurate soil: change is the very life
" And soul of husbandry; 'tis change of crops,
" By some *rotation* termed, that makes the ground
" Perform its task with unexhausted power.
" The broad-leaved plants, whose product is their
" root,
" They least exhaust; and next the legume tribes
" With leaves less broad, and odoriferous flowers
" That in the month of June make travellers pause;
" These, through their porous and extended blades,
" Draw from the air a portion of their food.
" The plants with narrow and spear-pointed blades,

" Of seed prolific, they exhaust the most;
" For from the suffering soil is chiefly drawn
" Their sustenance. Two scourging crops of these
" Who sows successively, defrauds the soil.
" But 'tis not only that the broad-leaved kinds
" Draw from the fostering earth a smaller share
" Of vegetable food; no, of itself
" The different mode of action saves the power
" Exerted: things inanimate acquire
" New power by change, like those endued with life.
" How light the flail swings in my weary hands,
" When sudden frost has midway down the ridge
" The plough arrested! so when from the barn
" I seek the field again, each labour there
" Seems for a time like rest."—

Vicissitude,
In all its forms, how grateful!—night and morn;

The lengthening day foretelling summer flowers,
While close they lurk enfolded in their buds,
As yet invisible; the twilight long
Of Summer's eve, that almost joins the dawn;
The ruddy dawn, all hush, till blythesome springs
The earliest lark, and carols in the beam
That, upward slanting, gilds his quivering throat;
The noontide's fervid glare, when panting herds
Betake them to the stream, lashing their sides;
The harvest's rustle, and the lengthened nights
Of moonshine sweet; the redbreast's song
Announcing Winter near; and Winter's self
With nights of fireside joys, homebred delights,
And days though short, yet not without their charm.

Now, at the ridge end stands the well-filled sack,
And hive inverted, while the sower steps,
With loaded sheet, along the furrowed ridge,

And flings the seed with equal crescent sweep,
Rejoicing in the tide, and pleased to close
His blinded eyes, as on the adjoining ridge
The passing harrows raise the golden[1] dust.

While dry and keen the east wind down the vale
Sweeps piercingly, and makes the violet-bud,
Shrinking, delay to spread its purple flower;
While youngling rooks, rocked in their airy nests,
Importunate, with ceaseless cawing, tire
The ear, as on the swinging bough the dam
Scarce keeps her perch, and deals the new-gleaned seed,
Then is the time, upon the barren moor,
To prove your skill. Where'er, by nature dry,
It stretches far with coarsest grasses spread,

[1] According to an old proverb, "an ounce of March dust is worth a pound of gold."

Upon a soil of shallow half-formed moss,
With gritty mould beneath, there pare the turf
And lay it loosely up, in hollow heaps,
Triangular; next kindle each, till far
The smoky clouds float rolling o'er the waste,
While plovers, screaming, sport amid the wreaths;
The ashes duly spread, no need you have
For more manure, but instant urge the plough,
That when sweet May puts on her hawthorn crown,
The new-gained field, laid down in seemly drills,
May ready for the turnip seed-time lie.

Nor is it solely on the barren moor
This mode is used; the lea that oft before
Hath felt the opening share, much gain derives
From fire; fields so prepared, whate'er the crop,
Are free from grub and insect, and each pest
That blights the farmer's hope.

All powerful Fire !
The time is not remote, when, in the field
Of peaceful toil, (as now on bloody plains
The warrior's direst instrument thou art,)
By all, thou shalt be hailed the engine prime
Of husbandry ! Nor only in degrees,
So high as to calcine, thy power is proved ;
Upon the new-ploughed tilth, where seeds and germs
Of noxious herbs and embrio vermin lurk,
Thy subtle element will parch the springs
Of insect and of vegetable life.

But how to bend the still ascending power
And make it downward act, requires much thought,
More knowledge in the chemic art abstruse,
Than falls to bard. Yet will I venturous dare,
And should I fail, perchance some better skilled

May light the flame, where I but strike a spark.—
Use not direct combustion to the tilth;
Vain were your cost and pains in such attempt;
*Accumulate the power;* and what so fit
As iron to retain or to convey,
With equal energy, or down or up
The wondrous element, which, save when bound
In chains metallic, still to heaven aspires?
And what more fitting form at once to hold
The kindled fuel, and apply the heat,
Than one well known,---the rolling cylinder,
Of bulk capacious? Glowing o'er the field
Behold it slowly drawn, and see the ridge
Send, from the hissing track, a steaming cloud.

But these are schemes for men of wide domains,
Which glad I leave to greet the lowly cot.
No month demands more of the cottar's care

Than this;---the garden and potatoe plat
Should now be delved, and, with no sparing hand,
Manured; a task performed at twilight hours
When stated labour ends; for now the day
Is equal with the night, and in the west
Faint lingers, with a pleasant parting smile.
The dibbling done, the dropping of the chips
Is left to little hands, well pleased to lend
Their feeble help: meanwhile the parents view
The finished work, anticipating years
When these weak hands will cherish their old age,
And lay their heads in peace below the turf.

Oft in this month the cottage hen comes forth
Attended by her brood, down-clad, yet poorly fenced
Against the eastern blast, that frequent brings
A shower of biting hail, which, as it falls,
The inexperienced younglings eager chace,

And peck the pattering drops: forbid not then
The clamorous flock, in quest of crumbs, to haunt
The fireside nook: how pleasant 'tis to hear
The summoning call whene'er the prize is found!
Or see the eager mother gather in
Her tiny justling brood, beneath the chair
On which the thrifty housewife sits and spins;
Or if, to approach this citadel, intruding cur
Presume, then see her issue forth, with plumes
All ruffled, and attack the foe, and drive
Him, howling, out of doors, drooping his tail,
And shaking, as he runs, his well-pounced ears.

This renovating season, too, calls forth
The humming tribes; for now the willow leaves,
And downy flowers on river-loving palms,
Afford materials for the curious cell;
And oft, even in this chill ambiguous month,

The labourers return with loaded thighs.
Therefore by day their gateway-porch enlarge,
But still at eve let it be closed secure,
Lest nightly winds, now in the brooding time,
Should, sifting in, the genial process mar.
Nor now withhold, if much reduced their store,
The needful loan ; for yet few flowers are found,
And these quite honeyless,—the daisy fair,
Basking upon some sunny-sheltered slope,
The snow-drops, and the violets that couch
On woody but still shadeless banks, and lead,
With fragrance wafted from their purpled bed,
The wandering step to hail the vernal joy,
The virgin breath of Spring, her fairest bloom.

No surer sign is known of climate mild,
And kindly soil, than early woodland flowers,
And chief the violet: it marks a dry

A crumbling, active mould; nor less the thorn,
'Neath which it blows, if early clothed with leaves,
Screening from prying eyes the thrush's nest,
Bespeaks a genial soil, and clime benign.

The early songs of birds, if clear and full,
Ere yet the primrose blow, they too bespeak
A smiling sky; but of them all, the lark
Affords the surest signs:—if high he soar,
And higher still, as if he circling scaled
Some airy pyramid, until his lessening bulk
At last eludes the weary sight, while faint
His song at times still meets the doubting sense,
Be sure, the higher regions of the air,
Around the buoyant chorister, breathe soft,
Breathe placidly;—and when the welkin's warm,
Nor sudden frost, nor rain will harm your fields.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## April.

*Now blooms the lily by the bank,*
*The primrose down the brae,*
*The hawthorn's budding in the glen,*
*And milk-white is the slae.*

BURNS.

## ARGUMENT.

*Address to April—Characteristics of the month—Time for barley sowing—Steeping of seed—Fences—Condemnation of the practice of smashing hedges—Faults in the mode of hedge-planting pointed out—A better mode recommended—Rustic courtship—A wedding.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## April.

THROUGH boughs still leafless, or through foliage thin,
The sloping primrose-bed lies fair exposed,
Begemmed with simple flowers, gladdening the sight.
Hail! month of buds and blooms, of shooting blades
That spread the fallow fields with vivid green!
Hail, Nature's birth-time! hail, ye gentle showers
That, in the opening blossoms, lie like tears
In infant eyes, soon giving place to smiles,

To sunny smiles of peace, of joy serene.
How calm the woods! as if they all had stilled
Their waving branches, listening to the songs
Of love-tuned ditties, warbled sweet from thorns
Enwreathed with forming flowers: all other sounds
Are hushed,---unless, scared from the brooding task
By man's approach, the sudden whirring wing
Betray the bush where hangs half hid the nest:
Return, poor bird! I'll find another path,
Until thy pleasing task be done; return,
('Tis not the spoiler's step,) complete thy work,
Cheered by thy twig-perched mate: enough for me
To hear his song, far sweeter there, I ween,
Than, through the wirey grate, a captive's lay.

Now clover fields expand the luscious blade,
But tender still, while, on the upland leas,
The yeanlings stagger round their bleating dams:

The orchard's drooping boughs put forth their blooms,
Purple of loveliest hue yblent with white :
The sweetbrier's buds unfold ; and perfumed gales
A lullaby o'er Nature's cradle sigh.

Soon as the earliest swallow skims the mead,
The barley sowing is by some begun ;
While others wait until her clay-built nest,
Completed, in the window-corner hang ;
Or till the schoolboy mock the cuckoo's note.
He that would reap a plenteous barley crop,
Should in saline infusion drench the seed ;
For thus the nascent embryo, ere it shoots,
Is fortified against the ravenous grub.
When so prepared, no dwarfish patch deforms
The field irregular, but every ridge
Erects its bristling awns, equal in height,
Like steely points by marshalled phalanx reared.

The seed-time closed, the fences, hedge and ditch,
Demand your tendance; first the ditches clear,
And then, with cautious hand, the hedges lop,
Broad at the bottom, tapering by degrees,
As to the top the shears or bill ascend.

Some husbandmen, as if by rage impelled,
With unrelenting hatchets, level low
Each full-grown hedge, just as it gains its prime,—
Now in its full blown beauty: withering, soiled,
The flowery branches lie, with here and there
A ruined nest inverted, while behold!---
'Stead of the sheltering thicket stretching fair,---
A row of stumps, from which, in future years,
Another hedge, of weaker stem and twig,
May spring again to shield the fenceless croft.
And whence this love of massacre! this rage
Perverse, unnatural, so near a-kin

To that propensity, infecting some
Who think,---that Nature gave the noble steed
A spine six joints too long ; that ears acute
Deform the head, and should be roundly pared ;
And that the neck surmounted by the mane,
The cloud where dwells the thunder, is improved
When modelled by the bristling back of hog !

Oft times, 'tis true, a single row of thorns
Is found a feeble fence ; but to destroy
That row, is not the mode to give it strength.
The error lies in planting single rows ;---
And, heedless of variety of soil,
Clay, sand, or gravel,---dry, or wet, or cold,---
Planting the hawthorn shrub as fit for all.
In marshy soils, the hawthorn, covered o'er
With lichen gray, appears an aged bush
While only young, and in this bloomy month

Puts forth no blossom : stuntedly it grows,
With sickly sprays in dusky foliage robed.

Nor is the single stripe preferred for thrift
Of ground : observe the space it occupies ;---
The bank, which common custom thus allots,
Contains full oft a space from side to side
Superfluous, which, if used aright, would give
A fence impregnable to herd or flock.
The genius of the thorn is misconceived ;
It loves not solitude ; like all the tribes
With prickles armed, the under-growth of woods,
It thrives most vigorously when interwarped
With kindred, not with sister shrubs : Observe,
In woodland glades, the thickets that present
The closest barrier to the rambling step,
Are those where shrubs of various kinds combine.
A hedge should be a thicket lengthened out,

Where, though one plant may fail (and if one plant
In hedges of a single file decay,
The flaw is rarely cured,) 'tis scarcely missed.
Let then your bulging quickset-bank be clothed,
From side to side, with shrubs of various kinds.
Let hawthorn chief prevail, but with it mix
The bramble with its stretching limbs; the brier,
Whose prickly leaves and twigs resent the touch
Of hostile mouth; the sloethorn's hardy spray,
Unbending, armed with formidable prongs;
The plumtree wild, the willow, and the whin,
Of brilliant golden hue, where, blossom-perched,
Carols the linnet[1] of the roseat plumes.
Let these, united in confusion strong,
Grow up unchecked, save at the bounding line;
There place your foot, let not a twig encroach.
Thus on a space, not more than what you waste

[1] The rose-linnet.

In fostering, with thriftless care and cost,
A single row of plants, (which, like a chain,
Is useless if a single link give way,)
You rear a verdant mound, combining strength
And durability with beauty's charm,---
Displaying, from the time of opening buds
Till ripening grain wave girt in its embrace,
An ever-varying wreath of flowers and fruits,
Which, to an eye that's fanciful, might seem
A crown encircling Ceres' rustling head.

Now, 'mid the general glow of opening blooms,
Coy maidens blush consent, nor slight the gift,
From neighbouring fair brought home, till now refused.
Swains, seize the sunny hours to make your hay,
For woman's smiles are fickle as the sky:

Bespeak the priest, bespeak the minstrel too,
Ere May, to wedlock hostile, stop the banns.

The appointed day arrives, a blythesome day
Of festive jollity; yet not devoid
Of soft regret to her about to leave
A parent's roof; yes, at the word *join hands*,
A tear reluctant starts, as she beholds
Her mother's look, her father's silvery hairs.
But serious thoughts take flight, when from the barn,
Soon as the bands are knit, a jocund sound
Strikes briskly up, and nimble feet beat fast
Upon the earthen floor. Through many a reel,
With various steps uncouth, some new, some old,
Some all the dancer's own, with Highland flings
Not void of grace, the lads and lasses strive
To dance each other down; and oft, when quite

Forespent, the fingers merrily cracked, the bound,
The rallying shout well-timed, and sudden change
To sprightlier tune, revive the flagging foot,
And make it feel as if it tripped in air.

When all are tired, and all his stock of reels
The minstrel, o'er and o'er again, has run,
The cheering flaggon circles round; meanwhile
A softened tune, and slower measure, flows
Sweet from the strings, and stills the boisterous joy.
May be, *The Bonny Broom of Cowdenknows,*
(If simply played, though not with master hand,)
Or *Patie's Mill,* or *Bush aboon Traquair,*
Inspire a tranquil gladness through the breast;
Or that most mournful strain, the sad Lament
For Floddenfield, drives mirth from every face,
And makes the firmest heart strive hard to curb
The rising tear,—till, with unpausing bow,

The blythe strathspey springs up, reminding some
Of nights when Gow's old arm, (nor old the tale,)
Unceasing, save when reeking cans went round,
Made heart and heel leap light as bounding roe.
Alas! no more shall we behold that look
So venerable, yet so blent with mirth,
And festive joy sedate; that ancient garb
Unvaried,—tartan hose, and bonnet blue!
No more shall Beauty's partial eye draw forth
The full intoxication of his strain,
Mellifluous, strong, exuberantly rich!
No more, amid the pauses of the dance,
Shall he repeat those measures, that in days
Of other years, could soothe a falling prince,
And light his visage with a transient smile
Of melancholy joy,—like autumn sun
Gilding a sere tree with a passing beam!

Or play to sportive children on the green
Dancing at gloamin hour; or willing cheer,
With strains unbought, the shepherd's bridal-day!

But light now failing, glimmering candles shine
In ready chandeliers of moulded clay
Stuck round the walls, displaying to the view
The ceiling, rich with cobweb-drapery hung.
Meanwhile, from mill and smiddy, field and barn,
Fresh groupes come hastening in: but of them all
The miller bears the gree, as rafter high
He leaps, and, lighting, shakes a dusty cloud all round.

In harmless merriment protracted long,
The hours glide by. At last, the stocking thrown,
And duly every gossip rite performed,

Youths, maids, and matrons, take their several
ways;
While drouthy carles, waiting for the moon,
Sit down again, and quaff till day-light dawn.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## May.

*Herba comis, tellus nitet herbis, frondibus arbor,*
*Luxuriat lætum læta per arva pecus.*

BUCHANAN.

## ARGUMENT.

*Address to May—Some characteristics of the month—Clover ridge —Corncraik—Mowing for the stall recommended—Stall feeding, unless in winter, unknown in former times—Herd-boy—his hut and occupations—Old manners giving way to the encroachments of trade—Some remnants still to be found—Improvement of mosses—Effects of this improvement in respect to certain birds Description of a family removing to a city—Miserable effects of the change—Appeal to landed proprietors on this subject— Hints for chusing a farm.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## May.

Sweet month! thy locks with bursting buds be-
gemmed,
With opening hyacinths and hawthorn flowers,
Fair still thou art, though showers bedim thine eye.
The cloud soon leaves thy brow, and mild the sun
Looks out with watery beam, looks out and smiles.

Light now the breezes sigh along the vale,
Gently they wave the rivulet's cascade,
And bend the flowers, making the lily stoop

As if to kiss its image in the stream,
Or curl, with gentlest breath, the glassy pool,
Aiding the treachery of the mimic fly,
While, crouching warily behind a bush,
The angler screened, with keenest eye intent,
Awaits the sudden rising of the trout :—
Down dips the feathery lure ; the quivering rod
Bends low : in vain the well-hooked captive strives
To break the yielding line : his side upturned,
Ashore he's drawn, and, on the mossy bank
Weltering, he dyes the primrose with his blood.

How gay the fields ! arrayed in lovely green
Of various tint : but deepest of them all
The clover ridge, where now at eve is heard
The corncraik's harsh, yet not unpleasing call,
Oft pausing, still renewed from place to place.
Vain all attempts to trace her by her note ;

For, when the spot whence last it came is reached,
Again 'tis heard hoarse harping far behind,---
Till silenced by the mower's rasping stone.

No use to which the clover field is put
Repays so well as mowing for the stall,
For not a blade is wasted; while your herds,
Screened from the sun, and from molesting bite
Of vexing flies, peaceful enjoy the cool
And fragrant meal, or drowsy chew the cud.

In times of old, stall-feeding was unknown,
Save during winter months: inclosures then
Were rare, and every hill-side, every lea
And broomy bank, was vocal with the notes
Of rustic pipe, or rudely chaunted rhymes,
Responsive echoed wild from herd to herd,[1]

[1] Used here in the Scotch sense, as signifying *the keeper of the herd.*

Tending their charge of mingled sheep and kine.
And still there may be seen, on Scotia's braes,
The shepherd boy, with horn and club, and dog,
Couched on the chequered plaid, and, at a side,
His little turf-built hut, with boughs o'erlaid,
Wherein are placed, from sudden shower secure,
*The Life of Wallace wight*, with goodly store
Of ballads old and new, which oft he cons.
And thus, in pleasing solitude, he spends
His harmless, not unprofitable hours,
Till, by his brazen dial warned, he drives
Homeward, at noon, his flock.

O simple times
Of peaceful innocence, fast giving way
To Trade's encroaching power! Yes, Trade ere long
Will drive each older custom from the land,

Will drive each generous passion from the breast.
Even love itself, that in the peasant's heart
Was wont to glow with pure and constant flame,
Now burns less purely than in times of old ;
A fatal sign. Yet still the " trysting thorn"
Is seen to bloom elsewhere than in the song
Of youthful bard : Beneath the greenwood tree,
When on May morning, maids, to gather dew,
Hie to the primrose bank, the mutual vow
Is pledged, and hallowed kept, though absence, war,
And, keenest pang ! supposed forgetfulness,
Conspire to shake the true and trusting heart :
Still in the gloamin, by the river side,
When calmness sleeps upon the smooth expanse,
And all is hush, save plunge of sportive trout,
(Propitious hour !) fond lovers meet and stray,
Forgetful of the time, till, from below
The adverse bank, peeps out the warning moon.

In moorland farms, the season now invites
Him, who would change the heath-flower for the pea,
To draw his drains both deep and broad, with sides
Of easy slope. Seldom three ells in width
And two in depth, are, by experience, found
Unsuitable. Where mosses level stretch,
With hoary caunachs bending in the blast,
There wider, deeper, scoop; for slowly there
The sable current flows: yet, to an eye
That's skilful, rarely will there want some line
Which, though descending with a gentle slope,
Scarcely perceptible, will yet afford
A fall sufficient to lay dry the whole.

But though laid dry, 'tis yet unfit to bear
The labouring team, and, for some years, the spade
Must turn the spongy soil, and form the ridge.

Chiefly with lime, profusely scattered, mix
The surface soil, while in a moistened state;
For, when devoid of moisture, moss resists
The caustic power, and lies a useless pulp.

From desarts thus reclaimed, some vainly hope
At once to reap a rustling crop, but find
Frustrate their hopes, and seed and labour lost.
During the first two years potatoes yield
A sure increase, abundant; for their leaves
Luxuriant shade the open soil, that else,
Unable to retain or dew or genial shower,
Arid and steril lies. Besides, the plants
Of taller stem require a firmer hold
Than moss affords, which, but by slow degrees
Subsiding into solid mould, displays
A waste transformed into a waving plain.

No more the heath-fowl there her nestling brood
Fosters, no more the dreary plover plains;
And when, from frozen regions of the pole,
The wintry bittern, to his wonted haunt,
On weary wing, returns, he finds the marsh
Into a joyless stubble-ridge transformed,
And mounts again to seek some watery wild.

These tribes, exiled, another resting place,
Adapted to their wants, soon find; but man,
When forced his dwelling-place to leave, the fields
Which he and his forefathers ploughed, and seeks,
Alas! to find some other home of peace,
Where he may live a tiller of the ground,
He seeks in vain; sad the reverse which he
And his are doomed to prove!---no choice is left
But exile to a foreign shore, or, worse,
To darksome city lane. Behold the band

With some small remnant of their household gear,
Drawn by the horse which once they called their
own ;
Behold them take a last look of that roof,
From whence no smoke ascends, and onward move
In silence ; whilst each passing object wakes
Remembrances of scenes that never more
Will glad their hearts ;---the mill, the smiddy blaze
So cheerful, and the doubling hammer's clink
Now dying on the ear, now on the breeze
Heard once again. Ah, why that joyous bark
Precursive ! Little dost thou ween, poor thing,
That ne'er again the slowly-stepping herd,
And nibbling flock, thou'lt drive a-field or home;
That ne'er again thou'lt chace the limping hare,
While, knowing well thy eager yelp, she scorns
Thy utmost speed, and, from the thistly lea
Espies, secure, thy puzzled fruitless search.

Now noisome alleys, and the crowded street,
Thy haunts must be.

But soon thou wilt forget
The cheerful fields; not so the infant train,
Thy playmates gay; not so the exiles old,
Who thought at last, below yon church-yard elms,
Now fading from their view, to lay their heads
In peace; they, old and young, ne'er will forget
Their former happy home. Oft from their high
And wretched roof, they look, trying, through clouds
Of driving smoke, a glimpse of the green fields
To gain, while, at the view, they feel their hearts
Sinking within them. Ah! these vain regrets
For happiness, that now is but a dream,
Are not their sorest evil; no, disease
(The harvest of the crowded house of toil,)

Approaches, withering first the opening bloom
Of infant years :---As wild flowers, which the hand
Of roaming botanist, from some sweet bank,
Remote in woodland solitudes, transplants
To his rank garden mould, soon droop the head,
And languish till they die ; so, pining, sink
These little ones. O ! that heart-wringing cry,
To take them home,---to take them home again,---
Their ceaseless, death-bed cry, poor innocents !
Repeated while the power to lisp is theirs ;---
Alas ! that home no more shall ye behold,
No more along the thistly lea pursue
The flying down ; no more, transported, rush
From learning's humble door, with play-mates blythe,
To gather pebbles in the shallow burn ;
Death is your comrade now,---the grave your home.

O ye, whose princely territories stretch
Afar o'er hill and dale, think,—ere ye sweep
Your ancient tenantry from off the land,—
That swollen rent-rolls are too dearly bought,
By that enormous misery which ye hurl
On ruined hundreds, to make way for one.

Some ousted husbandmen, when other lands
Are in their power, reject the golden boon,
And often rue the occasion lost, deterred
Too easily by fear, clothed in the garb
Of prudence. Stunted crops, a scanty sward,
Though doubtful signs, the over-prudent scare
From lands oft times intrinsically rich.
Some signs there are by nature pointed out,
And not dependant on the care of man,
All things disguising; these will not mislead,

These you may trust. The herbs, hung round with
bells,
Denote, unerringly, a soil that's dry;
And chief the fox-glove flower, wherein the bee
Diving, concealed, extracts ambrosial food.
The blue-bell, too, where'er the soil is moist,
Ascends the sheep-fold's turfy bound, and shakes
Its pretty flowerets in the July gale.

Profusion even of weeds, o'ertopping rank
The half-choaked growth of grain or pulse,
Though most unsightly to the well-skilled eye
Of husbandry, are signs, that in the soil
There is a vigorous, though neglected power.
Nor be forgot the broom's thick clustering blow,
Whose blazing brightness on a day of June
Dazzles the eye, making it fain to rest
On flowers of soberer hue: sometimes with growth

So strong, luxuriantly strong, it shoots,
That scarcely o'er the golden forest peers
The wildered heifer's horns, or higher crest
Of proudly neighing steed. Doubt not that there
A native pith of soil, a native warmth
And kindliness resides; rely that there
Grain, pulse, or root, whate'er the crop, will yield
An early and exuberant increase.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## June.

*O'er heaven and earth, far as the ranging eye*
*Can sweep, a dazzling deluge reigns; and all*
*From pole to pole is undistinguish'd blaze.*

THOMSON.

## ARGUMENT.

*Stillness of noon, and general rest of nature—Pernicious consequences, to men and cattle, of labour in the heat of the day—Twenty hours of light at Mid-summer—Recommendation that the old custom of labourers sleeping at mid-day should be revived—Description of the dawn—Drill-ploughing of beanfield—Reason of planting beans in drills, and culmiferous plants in the broadest way—Slopes best for beans—Time for weeding turnip-field with the plough—with the hoe—Cut down weeds on leas before seed formed—Some herbs that are classed with weeds ought to be spared—The aromatic tribes, mint, sage, thyme, of use against insects—Burning birch, broom, and bourtree blossoms between ridges of* green crops *a remedy against the fly—Plentiful manure the best preventive—Hay-making; part of grass crop should be used for stall-feeding—Want of shade hurtful to flocks—Plantations in sheep-walks—Places fit to be planted—Destruction of ancient forests lamented—Ettrick—Torwood—Apostrophe on the Battle of Bannockburn.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## June.

Beneath the fervour of the noon-tide beam
All Nature's works in placid stillness pause,—
Save man, and his joint labourer the horse,
The bee, and all the idly busy insect tribes;
Even 'mid the deepest groves, the merry bird
Sits drowsily, with head beneath its wing;
Each woodland note is hushed, save when the plaint
Of cooing ring-dove steals upon the ear.
Let man the lesson read, and learn to know
The seasons of the day, as of the year;

To mark the hours for labour and for rest,
Nor sacrifice convenience, ease, and health,
To method's rules, which only then are wise,
When bending to the changing year's decree.
The shortened reign of night, the early peep
Of dawn, protracted long, yet giving light
Abundant for the labours of the field,
Point out the hours for toil. Why should the plough,
Or brandished hoe, gleam in the sultry ray,
When man and beast, beneath a load of heat
Oft panting stop oppressed. Hence Fever comes,
And hence the deadly sun-stroke ; hence old age,
And prematurely lyart locks, to man ;
And hence (what, in these calculating times,
Will seem of more account) an unseen loss,
Proportioned to the cattle's shortened years.

Wiser than we, our fathers ere the dawn
Were in the field, and, when the sultry hours
Approached, enjoyed soft sleep. Let us be taught
By them; by nature lengthening out our day
To twice ten hours,---and labour in the cool.
Yes,---let the husbandman arouse to toil,
While yet the sky a deep-empurpled tint
Northward displays,---before the corncraik's call
In mist-veiled meads awake the nestling lark,
To hail the dawn. Sweet is the dubious bound
Of night and morn, when spray and plant are drenched
In dew; sweet now the odour-breathing birch,
The gaudy broom, the orchard's blushing boughs,
The milk-white thorn, on which the blackbird roosts,
Till light he shakes his ruffling plumes, and chaunts
His roundelay; and sweet the bean-field rows,

'Tween which the drilling plough is artful steered,
Shaking the dew-drop gently from the bloom.

See how the blooms around each bladed shoot,
From root to summit cluster thick the stalk;
(A beauteous sceptre fit for Ceres' hand)---
Then mark the contrast of the ear-crowned stalk,
Barren below, and in that difference learn
Why, 'twixt the bean-field's marshalled ranks, is left
Free space for air and sun; and why the spikes
Of bearded grain wave equal o'er the plain.
Hence, too, this lesson learn,—the sloping croft
Suits well the podded kind; for there soft Zephyr,
Kissing the lowest flowers, refreshes all,
Then waves his lingering wings, wafting afar
A balmy odour: struck with new delight,
The toil-worn traveller pauses on his way,

And, with a smile of pleasure, snuffs the air.
Perhaps some veteran, whom Egyptic sands
Have reft of sight, (O when will warfare cease!)
Leans on his staff, and wishes that but once,
But only once, he could behold these blooms,
Which now recal his father's little field.

Now is the time before the thistle blow,
While gule is in the flower, and charlock breathes
Its cloying scent around, the weeding task
To urge between the turnip's verdant ranks.
Emburied by the double mould-board, down
On either side the noxious race are laid,
While, by the waves of crumbling earth heaved up,
The plants are cherished.

Some the hoe prefer,
Which female hands, or, if of lighter make,

The childish grasp can wield; even his small hands,
Of years so simple, that he grieves to hurt
The pretty flowers, which, strung about his neck,
He wears with more delight than kings their crowns.
Thus, too, the crop itself (soon as the plants
Four leaves spread fully forth) is duly thinned.

Besides the plough and hoe, the sweeping scythe
Will much avail to wage the weeding war.—
If o'er your leas the yellow ragwort spread
A gaudy forest; or the seedy dock
Uprear its stalk prolific; or the tribe
Of thistles fenced with prickly arms,—spare not
The emblem dear, but ruthless lay it low,
With all its brother cumberers of the ground:
For, if allowed to stand, the down-winged seed
Flies far, a pastime to your playful elves,
To you a cause of meikle loss and bale.

Let none of all the intrusive race even form
Their seed; for know,---the fructifying stage
Of vegetation most exhausts the soil;
And, though cut down before they shed their fruit,
Mixed with the compost mound, they but create
A magazine of poisons for your fields.

Some herbs, that, to the unobserving eye
Of ignorance, are prized of small account,
Or classed with weeds, deserve a better name,
And should be spared: The aromatic tribes,
Mint, sage, and flowery thyme, are sovereign antidotes
Against the insect pest, powerful though small,
Blighting at once the green leaf and the grain.
Seldom I've seen this ruin, where the buzz
Of numerous bees comes from the wild-thyme balk,
That parts the various crops. The smaller race

Of insects shun most odours: hence our sires
Around and in their gardens, wont to rear
The strong-fumed elder; hence (the cause forgot)
Our garden borders still with boxwood fringed.
But if the tiny brood,---viewless at first,
Save by the microscopic power, that opes
The vast invisible of Nature's works,
Minutely grand,---have gathered strength to foil
Such weak annoyance; fear not round your fields,
Or even between your ridges, green and full
Of sap, to kindle heaps of birchen twigs
And bitter broom, mixed with the dark green leaves
And blossoms white of elder;---thick a cloud
Of acrid smoke, in rolling wreaths, invests
The death-struck hosts, galling the gazer's eye,
Thus proving, with what potency malign
Into the filmy organs of the foe
Diminutive, it needs must penetrate.

But better the prevention than the cure ;
And for prevention nought so much avails
As plentiful manure ; for then the seeds
Burst vigorous from their cells, nor linger long,
Blanched and enervated beneath the mould :
Quickly the blades the vivifying air
Inhale, assume a deep and deeper green,
And with such constant lusty growth expand
The leaf luxuriant, that no rest is found,
No tranquil *nidus* for the adhesive eggs,
Which thus, for ever marred, abortive prove.

Such is the culture of the verdant crops,
That in the wintry months fresh food supply
To herd and flock,—most grateful interchange
With strawy sheaf thrown in from time to time,
Or fragrant armful.

Hark! the whetstone rasps
Along the mower's scythe; for now's the time
To reap the grassy mead,---ere yet the bee
Into the purple clover-flower can shoot
Her searching tube,—ere yet the playful imp
Chacing, waist-deep, the restless butterfly,
Can from the red flowers suck the honied juice;
Now every stalk and leaf is full distent
With richest sap; nor is the latent strength,
By which a second growth rivals the first,
Exhausted by the efflorescent stage.

Though other field-works at the twilight break
Of day begin, shunning the sultry hours,
Hay-harvest, first and last, demands the sun.
Not till his thirsty beam have sipped the dew
That glistering returns his morning smile,
The mower's scythe be heard: then equal ranged,

With crescent strokes that closely graze the ground,
The stooping band extend the ridgy swathes.
Ah! spare, thou pitying swain, a ridge-breadth round
The partridge nest! so shall no new-come lord---
To ope a vista to some ivied tower,---
Thy cottage raze; but when the day is done,
Still shall the twig-bowered seat, on which thy sire
Was wont at even-tide to talk, invite
Thy weary limbs; there peace and health shall bless
Thy frugal fare, served by the unhired hand,
That seeks no wages save a parent's smile.

To dry the swathe, and yet to save the sap,
Should be your double aim. Some, void of skill,
Believe, that by long bleaching in the sun

Their end is gained; but thus they scorch, not dry,
The fragrant wreaths. This ancient error shun.

Soon as the scythes the mid-way field have reached,
See old and young at distance due succeed;
The waning spinstress, and the buxom maid;
The boy rejoicing in the important toil,
And striving, though with yet unequal strength,
To match the best,---all with inverted rakes
Toss the fresh wreath, and ted it lightly round,
With gleesome hearts, feeling the toil no task.
The very dogs seem smitten with the joy
Of this new merriment, this flowery work,
And, deeming all in sport, run, bark, and frisk,
Or toss, with buried snout, the tedded flakes.

Full soon the rake gains on the creeping scythe;
And now the sun, with westering wheel, begins
To slope his course, when, half forespent, the band
Bethink themselves, 'tis time to pause from toil.
Straight to the hedge-row shade, with willing step,
Though slow, they wend,---and, seated on the sward
In peaceful circle, join the gray-haired sire,
In asking God to bless the daily bread
He bounteously bestows! with cheerful hearts
Their bread they eat, nor other beverage seek
Than what the milky pail unstinted gives.
Finished the brief repast, and thanks returned,
Some sleep the hour away, some talk and jeer,
While willing laughter, on the thread-bare jest,
Bestows the meed of wit; others, apart,
Hold whispering converse with the lass they love.
The younger wights, with busy eye, explore
The foggage, where, concealed with meikle art,

The brown bee's cups in rude-formed clusters lie:
Or, should they find a sable swarm's retreat,
Deep earthed, the mining spade must lay it bare.
Nor unresisting do the inmates yield
Their little state; forth, at the first alarm,
They swarming rush, and chacing, in long train,
The flying foe, deal sharp, not deadly wounds.
Rallied, at length, the assailants to the charge,
With doublets doffed, attack the stinging tribes,
And leaguering the porch, ruthless beat down
The issuing hosts, till, by degrees reduced,
The feeble remnant, 'mid their fated homes,
Await their hapless doom;---the insidious mine
Meanwhile proceeds, and soon (like human states)
The little kingdom and its treasures lie
Prostrate and ruined 'neath the spoiler's hand.

While thus glides on the mid-day hour, the pause
Has not been useless; diligent the sun
(The time though short) already has prepared
The scattered verdure for the windrow waves.
First flat and low, till, as the day declines,
Now tossed, now side-long rolled, by many a rake,
Accumulating slow, waist high they swell.
One thing forget not,—that athwart the breeze
The rows be laid; for thus all through the heaps,
Quite loosely piled, the drying influence sifts.
Some leave them here to imbibe the midnight dews,
Or drenching shower, and day by day repeat,
For three full suns, the same unvaried course.
Be wiser thou, proportioning the time,
And quantity of labour, to the kind
And richness of the crop: Some grasses need
Much both of sun and breeze: the clover kinds,
And chief the red, so succulent, require,

Unless well mingled with the lighter tribes,
Much spreading, tossing, rolling to and fro.

Others again, whate'er the grassy crop,
If one day's sun they gain, no longer trust
The fickle sky, but rear the verdant cock
Of size diminutive; these, with a little sheaf
Bound near the tops, and by the fingers combed,
Then circularly spread like bee-hive's thatch,
They shield from sudden rain or nightly dew.
So fenced, the little rows, if gently raised
From time to time, in seven days more may join
To rear the swelling tramprick, and defy
Both wind and rain. Beware, nor long delay
To pile the stack, on trees and boughs transverse,
From damp secured :---see, it surmounts the reach
Of arms full-stretched;---then, from below, with
forks

Up-poised, the fragrant heaps are spread,
And trampled with much jest and merriment,
And hurtless falls of blythsome lad and lass.

To destine all your grassy crop to hay
Is thriftless husbandry. In summer drouths
Preserve a portion green for stake and stall ;
For in the pasture-field, the biting flies
Unceasingly, though lashed away, return,
And still return, tormenting, to the charge ;
Till, goaded past endurance, round the field
The maddened horse scours snorting, while the herd
Gallop in awkward guise, with tails erect,---
And, wildly bellowing, spite of hedge or ditch,
Rush to some neighbouring stream, and, plunging, lave
Their heaving sides.

Nor less the fleecy tribes
Suffer from noon-day heats. Upon thy hills,
Fair Scotland! which the goodly forest crowned
In times of old, a tree, or sheltering bush,
Is now but rarely seen,---the mossy breach,
Or stone, or flood-scooped bank, the only shield
Where, screened but scantily, the panting sheep
Can shun the sweltering beam: hence various ills
Assail the harmless race. Nature points out
The remedy,---a shade; and what so fit
For shade as trees: a narrow belt will serve,
If crescent-formed, to screen a numerous flock.
Select the spot with skill; trees love not heights.
Stunted and slow, upon the stormy brow,
They'll scarce afford your children's flock a shade.
Observe where Nature plants;---the little haugh,
The murmuring brooklet's cradle, or the side
Of grassy slope, just where it joins the plain.

There plant the bonny birch, the spreading elm,
The alder, quick of growth and early green,
The broad-leaved plane; and careful fence the whole.

Where, Ettrick! now, thy forest wide outstretched,
Here towering high, in all its greenwood pride,
As swelled the mountain steeps, and there as low
Sinking into the dale, one sylvan scene,
Extending far as eye could reach, unbroke
Save by the winding river's course, or cliff
Projecting, or sweet sunny glade, where lay,
In ruminating peace, the fallow deer,
A grove of antlers, or by airy tower
That far o'erlooked to guard the green domain,
Where, Ettrick, now thy pride! save in the song
Of that bold Minstrel, whose loud-clanging strings,

Struck by the lightning of his ardent soul,
Awaken echoes that responses made
To noise of wars recorded in his lay!
Where, Cheviot! now, thy oaken canopy
Of boughs, beneath whose twilight vault, full-
armed,
The horseman rode, nor scathed his nodding crest!
Where now thine, Torwood! sacred to the cause
Of Liberty! where now the tree revered,
Beneath whose boughs the head of Wallace lay
That ill-starred eve, ere Graham at Falkirk fell,
Beneath whose boughs the royal tent was stretched
Of Bruce, preparing for the glorious day
Of Bannockburn! At BANNOCKBURN---what heart,
That boasts one drop of Scottish blood, but feels
A patriot glow burn thrilling through his frame,
New-nerve his languid arm, and make him smile
At, (what in sober mood stirs bodings dark,)

At Gallic thunder threatening Albion's shores!
Even yet the ploughman, as with sideward curve
He passes by the memorable stone
(Fit pedestal for Freedom's form sublime,)
Wherein was fixed the Scottish standard, feels
A conscious pride his bosom swell, and grasps
With firmer hold the smooth-worn shafts.

To them who on a lovely morn of June,[1]
At break of day, knelt on the dewy sward,
While full in view Inchaffray's abbot reared
The sacred host;[2] to them who, ere the shut

[1] "Monday the 24th of June 1314, at break of day, the English army moved on to the attack."—HAILES.

[2] Maurice, abbot of Inchaffray, placing himself on an eminence, celebrated mass in sight of the Scottish army. He then passed along the front barefooted, bearing a crucifix in his hand, and exhorted the Scots, in few and forcible words, to combat for their rights and liberty. The Scots kneeled down. "*They yield,*" cried

Of blood-besprinkled flowers, fell in the cause
Of Freedom and their Country! to the men
Who that day's fight survived, and saw once more
Their homes, their children;—and, when silvery hairs
Their temples thin besprent, lived to recount,
On winter nights, the achievements of that day!---
To them be ever raised the muses' voice
In grateful song triumphant;---for by them
Was saved that independent state, so long maintained,
From which, though in an evil hour resigned,
Are now derived that liberty, those laws,
Beneath whose equal rule the swain secure

Edward; "*see they implore mercy.*" "*They do,*" answered Ingleram de Umphraville, "*but not ours. On that field they will be victorious, or die.*"

Now wandering, at the silent gloamin tide,
Amid his earing fields, anticipates,
With secret joy, and thankfulness of heart
Exuberantly full, a plenteous year!

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## July.

*Resounds the living surface of the ground:*
*Nor undelightful is the ceaseless hour,*
*To him who muses through the woods at noon.*

THOMSON.

## ARGUMENT.

*General features of this month—Destroy weeds—Cultivation of bees—Great vigilance necessary with bees at this season—Warm and sheltered situation best preventive of distant flights—Directions respecting the apiary—Trees, shrubs, and flowers—Honey dew—Prognostics of swarming—Directions when they swarm—Removal of bees at close of Summer to the moorlands—Diseased hive—Remedies—Virtue of honey as a medicine for man—Nature's remedies the most simple—Fever—Cold affusion—Apostrophe to Dr Currie—Cold-bathing preventive of fever—Swimming.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## July.

No more at dewy dawn, or setting sun,
The blackbird's song floats mellow down the dale;
Mute is the lark, or soars a shorter flight,
With carol briefly trilled, and soon descends.
In full luxuriance clothed, of various green,
The laughing fields and meadows, far and wide,
Gladden the eye: all-beauteous now
The face of Nature smiles serenely gay;
And even the motley race of weeds enhance
Her rural charms: Yet let them not be spared;

Still as they rise, unconquered, let the hoe
Or ploughshare crush them. In your fields permit
No wild-flower to expand its teeming bloom:
In wood and wild, there let them bud and blow
By haunted streamlet, where the wandering bee,
Humming from cup to bell, collects their sweets.

Though rarely prized by husbandmen, whose bounds
Embrace a widely spread domain, the bee
Is not contemned by him, whose narrow means,
Upon his ploughgate croft, require the help
Of every rural art; nor by the man
Whose sole possession is his cottage home,
And garden plat; nor yet by him who loves
Now to survey the planets as they roll,
Now to explore the wondrous insect's ways,

Adoring, while in both he traces power,
Almighty as benign.

This month requires,
From all who cultivate the frugal race,
A vigilance unceasing, lest unwarned
They lift too late their lightened hives, and find
The younger broods have ta'en a distant flight.
If in an evening sky, serene and calm,
The martins higher than their wonted flight,
On arrowy pinions, scarcely quivering, soar,
And make the lofty turret or the spire,
That far below low'rs in the deepening shade,
Seem of its height diminished,—then the air
Its utmost buoyancy has gained; and hence
All things that in the liquid region ply,
Each bird and insect, float on easy wing:
On such an eve, who marks the martin's flight,

Needs not to scan the argent column's rise
Prophetic, but, from Nature's signs, foresees
A ruddy morning tinge the dappled cope.

Oft when, at even-tide, a cluster hangs
No larger than laburnum's tasseled flower,
Long ere the morrow's sun has dried the dews,
The emigrating tribe is gone past hope;
Nor, after anxious search o'er hill and dale,
Does e'er the slumberous owner hear again
Their welcome hum.—

Or, on a Sabbath morn,
Cloudy and calm, with not one sunny gleam
To lure them forth, I've seen a numerous swarm
(Whether attracted by the silence deep
And pause of rural toil, or sudden struck
By that instinctive impulse, which directs

More wisely than proud Reason's rules,) rush out
In myriads and take wing; while mingling sounds
Of distant church-bell, and the jangling pan,
Essayed in vain to stop the living cloud.

Such flights to hinder, nought conduces more
Than warm exposure, sheltered, sunny, low,
With pebbly rivulet, murmuring near at hand
O'er stones emerging from its chafing stream.
Before, but not so near as to o'ershade
Your buzzing hamlet, let the linden tree
Sweet foliaged, and laburnum's golden flowers,
Present the tribe, when meditating flight,
A tempting seat, a blossoming abode.
Let all around a labyrinth extend
Of various shrubs, blooming at various times,
From the first breath of Spring, till Autumn tinge
The universal blush with sober brown;—

And first the downy-blossomed palm,[1] the sloe-bush
dark,
Whose early flower anticipates the leaf,
The hawthorn, witness of fond lovers' vows,
The purple lilac, and the golden broom,
The rosy brier, and bramble stretching far
It's prickly arms. Defended by such walls,
In open plats be seen flowers of all hue,
And odorous herbs,—sweet rosmarine,
With wild thyme, breathing far its fresh perfume;
The early daisy, and the crocus cup;
The violet that loves a mossy couch;
The pale primrose; auricula full fraught
With vernal incense; lily-beds profuse,
As if some shaded wreath of Winter's snow
Had lingered in the chilly lap of Spring;
Fair daffodillies, hyacinthine rods

[1] A species of the willow.

Enwreathed with azure bells, pinks, marigolds,
And every blossom of the later year.
Who loves the labouring race, fails not to fill
Each nook around his dwelling-place with flowers,
Till every breeze that through his lattice plays
Bear fragrance, loading with delight the sense;
Even round his windows carefully he trains
Lithe honey-suckles, vocal with the hum
Of the loved tribes, which, on a summer's day,
While screened he sits within the quivering shade,
Lull every care, and charm his waking dream.

But none of all the flowery race affords
Supplies so plentiful of honey lymph,
As, on a misty morning, calm, serene,
Are seen, though rarely, pendent from the spikes
Of drooping speargrass; then all other herbs,
Each gaudy chaliced bloom, that in the sun

Twinkles with sterile dew, deserted hangs ;
And busily the humming labourers ply
Their easy task, returning loaded soon
In oft-repeated journies to the hive.

Than days preceded by these honied morns,
No time is more propitious for the flight
Of overflowing swarms. Soon as the sun
Has dried the dew, the light precursors fly,
Like warping midges on a summer's eve,
In reeling dance before the crowded porch.
Others along the outside of the hive
Run hurriedly, then stopping, ply their wings.
The inner legions, pouring from the gate,
Increase the pendant cluster, till at once,
Streaming, it mounts in air, but soon alights
Upon some neighbouring spray, which blackened bends

Beneath the load. Haste, spread the sheet, and lay
Two rods of mountain-ash along, to keep
An opening all around the hive when set.
Next cut the loaded branch, nor hesitate,
Though, tempting, through the heaving bunch peep forth
The purpling tint of plumbs full-formed, or ripe
The luscious cherry plead like beauty's lip :
Pomona's self her pruning hook would urge,
And save the living fruit : then spare not thou
The knife ; yet use it gently ; gently bear
The buzzing branch, and gently lay it down
Between the rowan[1] rods ; then o'er it place
Slowly the hive, and softly spread o'er all
Another sheet : quick to the transverse spokes
The myriad tribes will mount, and peaceful fill

[1] Mountain-ash.

Their new abode. There let them rest,
Until the sultry hours begin to cool.
Upon a level board then place the hive,
And round the juncture close each crevice up
With well-wrought clay : the noxious reptile race
Will else intrude. Sometimes through narrowest chink
The crawling snail, insinuating, drags
His slimy length, and riots on the comb.
Even here resources in themselves, devised,
Wisely devised, to meet the dire event,
Are by the ever-wondrous race displayed.
To death they first, with many a sting, devote
The unwelcome guest; and then the monstrous mass,
Which else, corrupting, through the commonwealth
Would spread contagion, closely they entomb
In catacomb, as in his pristine shell.

When Summer's blow of flowers begins to fade,
Some to the moorlands bear their hives, to cull
The treasures of the heathbell; simple flower!
That still extends its purple tint as far
As eye can reach, round many an upland farm:
There still, of genuine breed, the colly[1] meets,
Barking shrill-toned, the stranger rarely seen;
While near some rushy ricks of meadow hay
The startled horse stands gazing, then around
His tether-length of twisted hair full stretched,
He snorting scours: a toothless harrow serves
For garden gate,---where, duly ranged, the hives
Stand covered till the evening shades descend.
But when the sun-beams glisten on the dew,
Forth fly the stranger tribes, and far and near
Spread o'er the purple moor, cheering the task
Of him who busy digs his winter fuel;

[1] Shepherd's dog.

For 'mid these wilds no sound gives sign of life
Save hum of bee, or grashopper's hoarse chirp;
Or when the heath-fowl strikes her distant call;
Or plovers, lighting on the half-buried tree,
Scream their dire dirge where once the linnet sung.

If e'er disease assail the humming race,[1]
(For they, no more than man, escape disease,)
Its first approaches watch: nor are the signs
Ambiguous of their state: their colour fades;
A haggard leanness in their visage speaks;
The bodies then, bereft of life, are borne
From out the silent porch, and frequent flies
The winged funeral: deep, meanwhile, within,
A murmur faint, and long drawn out, is heard,
Like south winds moaning through a grove of pines.
Here, let me urge to burn strong-scented herbs,

[1] See Virgil's 4th Georgic.

Neglecting not the helpless commonwealth
To aid with honied reeds, pushed gently in:
And with the offered food fear not to mix
Oak-apple juice, dried roses, and wild thyme,
With centaury, exhaling powerful fumes.
In meadows grows a flower, by husbandmen
Called starwort; easily it may be known,
For, springing from a single root, it spreads
A foliage affluent, golden-hued itself,
While from the leaves of darkest violet,
An under-tint of lighter purple shines:
Harsh to the taste, it wrings the shepherd's mouth:
Its root, in wine infused, affords at once
The hapless sufferers medicine and food.

To man himself, the honey cell is found,
In various ills, a virtue to possess
Surpassing far the medicated cup—

Simple the remedies which Nature gives !
What cure so simple, and so powerful too,
As is the watery element, when fierce
Through every vein the sultry season rolls
A fev'rous tide, and fell Delirium nails,
Upon the throbbing head, his glowing crown.
O'er the parched skin the cold affusion flows
Again, and yet again, in copious stream ;
Till by degrees, more calmly, slowly, leaps
The restless pulse ; delicious coolness glides
Through all the frame ; and, as when thunder-
clouds
Have rolled away, and forky fires have ceased
To vex the welkin, forth the sun again
Looks down complacently on wood and stream ;
Illumined by his smile, the drooping flowers,
The trees, rejoice ;—so from the eye, obscured
Erewhile, the renovated soul beams forth

Intelligence on child and watching friend,
Raising their hands in silent thanks to God!

And did the Sage, whose powerful genius shed
A flood of light, where only glimmering rays
Erewhile confounded, not illumed, the path
Of science,—did that man, the orphan's friend,
Die unrewarded! No; a meed was his
Most grateful to his heart, a meed that soothed
His dying hour,—the sweet solacing thought,
That, though no more beside the couch of pain
His accents wafted healing on their wings,
His silent page, amid Disease's storm,
Was still the guiding chart to Safety's shore!
O what a balm to his benignant soul,
When looking forward to the parting hour,
To think that then, perhaps, some weeping groupe

Hailed, through his means, a parent snatched from
death!

Yet not alone, to quench the burning pest,
Its wondrous power the gelid lymph exerts;
Oft it extinguishes the kindling spark;
And when a youthful band, buoyant with joy,
Hie to the river side, they little ween,
That safety thus with pleasure is combined.
Come, then, ye jovial swains! and in the shade,
Ere sultry noon, throw off your cumb'rous garb:
The pool, relucent to its pebbly bed,
With here and there a slowly-sailing trout,
Invites the throbbing, half-reluctant, breast
To plunge:---the dash re-echoes from the rocks,
And smooth, in sinuous course, the swimmer winds;
Now, with extended arms, rowing his way,

And now, floating with sunward face, outstretched,
Till, blinded by the dazzling beam, he turns,
Then to the bottom dives, emerging soon
With stone, as trophy, in his waving hand.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## August.

*When corn-rigs wave yellow, and blue heather bells*
*Bloom bonny on moorland and sweet rising fells.*

RAMSAY.

## ARGUMENT.

*Characteristics of the month—Leveret—Partridge, and her brood--Sportsman reconnoitring the moors with dogs, anticipating the pleasures of the shooting season—Highland reapers journeying to the Lowlands--Reapers assembled to be hired—Address to Scotland as still the country of freedom—A word of advice to Statesmen—Wheat harvest—Danger from floods on river sides—Prognostics of heavy rain—River overflowing its banks—Land improved by the overflowing of rivers—Mud in creeks of stream—Top-dressing with composts of alluvial mud—Different magazines of manure supplied by nature—Lint-steeping destructive to fish—Fisheries—Herring fishing—Evening—Village herd—Sportsman returning from moorlands—Transition from that peaceful warfare to the situation of Spain.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## August.

Intense the viewless flood of heat descends
On hill, and dale, and wood, and tangled brake,
Where, to the chirping grashopper, the broom,
With crackling pod, responds; the fields em-
browned,
Begin to rustle in the autumn breeze,
While from the waving shelter, bolder grown,
The lev'ret, at the misty hour of morn,
Forth venturing, limps to nip the dewy grass.
The partridge, too, and her light-footed brood,

As yet half-fledged, now haunt the corn-field skirts,
Or on new-weeded turnip fields are spied,
Running, in lengthened file, between the drills.

Now to the heath, ere yet the wished-for morn,
That licences the game of death, arrive,
The sportsman hies to mark the moor-hen's haunt.
Boisterous with joy, his dogs bark, jump, and howl,
And running out before, in frolic chace,
Return as fast, marring his stumbling steps.
But when they reach the purple waste, afar,
With stooping heads, they roam, oft leaping up,
With backward look, to mark their master's mien.
He, with keen eye, prowling, surveys the ground,
And haply finds the game his dogs have missed.
Yes, with relentless eye, he sees the dam,
Basking by some old cairn, amid her brood,
Or spreading o'er their harmless heads her wings;

He sees, unmoved by all a mother's cares,
And, as they rise, he counts his destined prey,
Noting, with forward-darting look, the spot,
Where their yet feeble wings they panting rest.

Oft, at this season, faintly meets the ear
The song of harvest bands, that plod their way
From dark Lochaber, or the distant isles,
Journeying for weeks to gain a month of toil:
Sweet is the falling of the single voice,
And sweet the joining of the choral swell,
Without a pause ta'en up by old and young,
Alternating, in wildly-measured strain.
Thus they, 'mid clouds of flying dust, beguile,
With songs of ancient times, their tedious way.

At city gate, or market-place, now groupes
Of motley aspect wait a master's call.

The grey-haired man, leaning upon his staff,
Is there; the stripling, and the sun-burnt maid;
The sallow artizan, who quits his tools,
To breathe awhile among the pleasant fields,
And earn at once health, and his daily bread.
No scowling tyrant there goes round, and round,
Viewing the human merchandize with look
That fiends in vain would match; no dread is there
Of separation; parents, children, friends,
With one consent, take or reject the meed;
Place, time, and master, all are in their choice.

Scotland, "with all thy faults, I love thee still!"
For freedom here still on the poor man smiles,
Sweetens his crust, and his hard pillow smoothes.
O ye, who guide the state, and mould the laws,
Beware lest, with your imposts overstrained,
Beware! lest thus ye crush that noble spirit,

Which lives by equal laws, with them expires.—
Unequal burdens make the o'erburdened slaves;
And, making slaves, they make men cowards too.

But hence this joyless theme, and let me seek
The fields once more;---hark! at yon cottage door
The sickle harsh upon the grindstone grates,
Which, merrily, most uncouth music makes,
Drowning the song of him who whirls it round.

And now it oft befals, when farmers' hopes
Are all but realized, a mildew creeps
Along the wheaten ridge, blighting the ears.
Haste, then, the sickle urge, nor be deterred
Though, in some spots, a greenish tint pronounce
The ears unripe: the vegetating stage
Ere now is past; and should no canker shoot
Its poison through the plant, the grain will prove,

Though seeming immature, a healthy crop.
But, if allowed to stand, the subtle pest
Pervades stalk, husk, and grain, blasting the whole.
And even when your wheaten field betrays
No sickly hue, but gives a lusty rustle,
When waving in the wind, wait not in hope
That, standing, it will gain in bulk and weight:
Avail yourself betimes of sky serene,
And with the sun the reapers lead afield.
How pleasant to the husbandman the sight
Of gleaming sickles, and of swelling sheaves!
How joyfully he twists the rustling band,
And, pressing with his knee, binds up the sheaf!
While merrily the jest and taunt go round,
Running, like scattered fire, along the line.
And still the master's joke should, mingling, cheer
The stooping row, and make their labour light.

Beware, ye swains! whose level fields extend
Along a river-side, and build your sheaves
Beyond the utmost verge of highest floods.
Or, if you trust them on the perilous spot,
Watch carefully the signs foreboding change.

No sign of gathering storms, both wind and rain,
Is surer than the sea-fowl's inland flight.
For though the conflict of the winds and waves
Be distant far, a sympathetic heave
Is felt along the tranquil seeming bays,
Warning the hovering flocks of surges loud
That soon will lash the shore, and render vain
The piercing sight, which, in a peaceful sea,
Discerns, high on the wing, the finny prey:
But while their briny harvest thus is marred,
On shore the coming deluge draws the race

Of reptiles, from their haunts, in mead and grove
Concealed,—the puffing frog, the horned snail,
And all the species of the slimy tribes,
Repast profusely spread.

He, who contemns
These auguries, nor timely moves his shocks
To safer ground, will rue when, with the dawn
Awaking, loud the river's roar he hears:
To doubt, in vain he strives; his eye confirms
The tidings of his ear, and rapid down
The foamy current he beholds his sheaves
Sweeping along, while, 'mid the havoc, bleats
The floating lamb, with meek unconscious face.

Some rivers, by the mountain-torrents fed,
Rush down, with swell so sudden and so high,

That all her fleetness cannot save the hare,
Unless (as erst befel in Clyde's fair dale,)
She gain some passing rick: there close she squats.
Now in the middle current shot along
In swift career, now near the eddying side
Whirling amazed, while from the dizzy shore
Some shepherd's dog discerns the floating prize,
And, barking, scours along, then stops, but fears
To venture in; onward meanwhile she sails,
Till, through the broadened vale, the stream expand
In gentler course, and gliding past the bank,
Restore her, fearful, to the fields again.

Floods, ruinous to husbandmen, enrich
The land itself: See how the pendent sprays
That in the flood were dipt, are soiled, and judge

How richly fraught with vegetable food
The stream subsides upon the deluged plain.

This rich deposit oft unheeded lies
In little creeks, and windings of the stream,
Accumulated deep; whence, if removed
To swell the compost pile, another store,
Soon as another flood recedes, your care rewards.
But if your bank, from Nature, has received
No flexure, no recess, to intercept
The watery wealth, boldly the shore indent
With little bays, narrow and slanting up,
That past each entrance, smooth the current's force
May harmlessly, with easy flow, glide by.
A verdure deep, with many a daisy gemmed,
In early spring, delights the eye of him
Whose compost heaps, rich with alluvial mud,

O'erspread his pasture fields; for thus the roots
At once are shielded from the wintry frosts,
And fed with food, like that which, after showers
Of softest fall, or on a dewy morn,
Cloudy and still, is seen in earthy coils
Vermicular, appearing through the sward.
Thus human art still most successful proves,
When following nature with unconscious step.

Full many are the stores of rich manure
That lie neglected. Every sluggish ditch
And stagnant puddle, during summer heats,
Is bottomed with a fertilizing layer.
One sign unerring of a magazine,
On which the power putrescent has produced
Its full effect, is that small insect scum,
Minute and sable as the explosive grain,

Withal so light, that, by the softest breath
Of Autumn breeze, 'tis driven to and fro.
Would husbandmen look round with searching eye,
And use those meliorating means which lie
Oft unsuspected, or, if known, despised,
More rarely would they time and gold expend
For the vile sweepings of the noisome town.

The flaxen crop, which now 'tis time to pull,
Steeped in some neighbouring pond, converts
The simple water into strong manure.
Yet many, heedless, bear to far-off moors
The sheaves diminutive, and sink them deep
In sable pits, from whence was scooped the peat;
Or wantonly, in running brooks, immerge
This poison fatal to the scaly tribes.
Alas! below the tainted pool behold
The frequent upturned-side gleam in the sun.

Britannia, to thy richest treasures blind,
Treasures that teem in river, firth, and sea,---
Why sleep thy laws, and why that harvest blight
Which, without seed or toil, is gained? Extend
Protection to thy hardy mountaineers,
And, since extruded from their native wilds,
Permit them free possession of the waves.

How sweet, o'er Scotia's hill-encircled seas,
The evening sun-beam, slanting down the glens,
Illumes the scene where now the busy oars
Ply to the chaunted strain,---soft, soothing, wild,---
Of days of other years,---perhaps a song,
Or cadence of some vocal ruin, spared
By ruthless Time, relenting to destroy
Those lays with which the voice of Cona lulled
The weary wave that slumbered on the shore!

But now, with bustling noise, from every stern
Run out the folded nets, and, in the brine
Plunging, leave far behind a foamy track.

In lowland dales, at this bland hour of eve,
The village herd slow from the common wends
Each to her well-known stall, while loud the horn
Blows many a needless blast; and homeward shots
Of sated sportsmen, at the moorland skirts,
Returning weary, break the placid hush.
O peaceful war! alas, in other lands,
The sylvan war is silent. Loud the roar
Of thundering ordnance echoes 'mid the rocks
Of proud Iberia, throned amid the blaze
Of pealing tubes; her hands distained
With other vintage than the wine-press yields;
Her crown with thistles, roses, shamrocks, wreathed;

And at her feet the Gallic lilies torn,
Deep-blushing with the blood of murdered babes.
Around her see the shattered columns form,
While Freedom's standard, waving in her grasp,
Soars like an eagle o'er the storm-fraught clouds.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## September.

*Thy bounty shines in Autumn unconfined,*
*And spreads a common feast for all that lives.*

THOMSON.

## ARGUMENT.

*Reaping of oats—Patridge-shooting—Equinoctial winds—Rains more injurious to harvest—Hint at a mode of drying corn in the field—Reaping by moonlight—Highland reapers, on Sabbath, reading Gaelic Bible—Apostrophe on the translation of the Bible into the Gaelic language—Leading of corn—Stack-building—Tranquillity and silence of the fields after harvest—Kirn, or harvest-home—Highland reapers returning, hearing their language spoken in their native glen—Pleasure of hearing the Scottish language first spoken on re-crossing the Border—Regret on prospect of leaving Scotland.*

## September.

Clear is the sky, and temperate the air,
That, scarcely stirring, wafts, with gentlest breath,
The gossamer light glittering in the sun.
And now, the wheat and barley harvest o'er,
Blythsome the reapers to the lighter work
Of oaten-field repair, and gaily stoop,
Grasping the lusty handfuls, while they draw,
Close to the ground, the sickle, saving thus
The useful straw for fodder or for lair.
Severe, yet cheerful, both to old and young,

This stooping labour; frequently they pause,
For reason slight, or none; sometimes to gaze
Upon the passing coach, that, 'neath a load
Enormous, seems to stagger, as it rolls,
Amid a cloud of dust; sometimes to taunt
The traveller on foot who plods his way,
And, failing in the attempted repartee,
Quickens his pace to shun the vollied shower
Of rustic wit; or by the fowler's gun
Startled, while o'er the neighbouring hedge
The wounded partridge flies, and at their feet
Falls, vainly fluttering, followed fast by dog
And master. Ruthless man! how canst thou see,
As, lifting that poor bird, it in thy face
Looks up; how can'st thou see that piteous look,
That blood-drop trickling down its panting breast,
Nor feel compunction for the barbarous deed!

Now come the equinoctial blasts, that lay
Level the sheaves. This danger to avoid,
Look at the forest's topmost twigs, or larch,
That ever shuns the most prevailing wind,
And let your shocks, placed lengthwise to the storm,
Present their sloping ends; else, if they stand
Athwart the sweeping tempest's line, o'erthrown,
They frequent lie drenched in a furrow pool.

But more destructive to yon new-piled sheaves,
Are rains, which, unaccompanied with wind,
Come drizzling down in ceaseless, soaking fall.
Singly the sheaves must then be placed upright:
Yet even this remedy oft fruitless proves;
For nightly gusts at intervals will blow,
And, with the morning sun, you find your work
Laid prostrate.

Strange that implements abound,
In every process of the farmer's art,
Save this; and yet, without much pains or cost,
Means sure there are, by which, in shorter space
Than now required, if but the rain remit,
The dripping crop may thoroughly be dried.
A row of forked stakes draw cross the field,
With spars from cleft to cleft laid all along,—
On these your sheaves, bound near the tops, suspend;
Thus, while descends the rain, fast trickling off
Each dangling sheaf, the capillary bunch,
Free of the plashy ground, no moisture draws.

In rainy harvests, when the day is dimmed
With one continued shower, sometimes the night
Clears up, and, through the parting clouds, the moon

Shoots forth, o'er tower and tree, a silvery beam.
Such interval the prudent husbandman
Will eager seize, and by the pallid light,
Though oft obscured by slowly passing clouds,
Will urge the reaping task, nor will desist,
Though on the eve, before the hallowed morn,
The brightening change begin; at such a time,
No law of God forbids the needful toil
To be protracted, till the fading orb,
And morning's bird, proclaim the day-spring nigh.
Then let your labour cease, and let not man
Determine rashly when to disregard
That heavenly precept, merciful, benign,
*Keep holy to the Lord the seventh day.*
On this blest day the weary reaper rests
In thankfulness of heart: see far retired,
Behind a shadowing shock, yon little groupe
Of strangers on the ground, and in their hands,

In tongue unknown in lowland plain, the Word
Of Life![1] O grand emprize! O generous boon!
That little book to Scotia's farthest isles,
In each low cottage, comfort speaks, and peace:
Even to the hapless exile, as he lifts
His eldest born, and, weeping, bids him take
A last look of the fast-receding shore,
It consolation speaks, pointing his view
To that blest country whence they'll ne'er depart!

Soon as, by drying power of sun and wind,
Your crop is ready for the stack or barn,
One hour delay not; every other work
Defer, and, cheery, o'er the ridges drive
The high-piled wains; then back, with quickened pace,
Return, and lighter load of smiling elves,

[1] The translation of the Bible into the Gaelic language.

Whose purple cheeks the bramble vintage dyes:
Haste, quick reload, and back, and back again,
The journey short repeat, till all your fields
Are to the stubble cleared, and gradual rise
The cheerful pyramids.

On transverse boughs
Construct them with due care, for thus you guard
'Gainst earthy damps, and thus the pilfering mouse
More rarely will intrude, than when your sheaves
Are laid in contact with the burrowed soil.
Against this evil let the screeching owl,
A sacred bird be held; protect her nest,
Whether in neighbouring crag, within the reach
Of venturous boy, it hang, or in the rent
Of some old echoing tower, where her sad plaint
The live-long night she moans, save when she skims,

Prowling, along the ground, or, through your barn,
Her nightly rounds performs; unwelcome guest!
Whose meteor-eyes shoot horror through the dark,
And numb the tiny revellers with dread.

Of forms the circular is most approved,
As offering, in proportion to its bulk,
The smallest surface to the storm's assault.
To turn the driving rain, the outer sheaves,
With bottoms lower than the rustling tops,
Should sloping lie. When to the crowning sheaf
Arrived, distrust the sky; the thatch lay on,
And bind with strawy coils. O pleasant sight!
These lozenzed ropes that, at the tapering top,
End in a wisp-wound pinnacle, a gladsome perch,
On which already sits poor Robin, proud,
And sweetly sings a song, to Harvest Home!

The fields are swept, a tranquil silence reigns,
And pause of rural labour, far and near.
Deep is the morning's hush; from grange to grange
Responsive cock-crows, in the distance heard
Distinct as if at hand, soothe the pleased ear;
And oft, at intervals, the flail, remote,
Sends faintly through the air its deafened sound.

Bright now the shortening day, and blythe its close,
When to the kirn,[1] the neighbours, old and young,
Come dropping in to share the well-earned feast.
The smith aside his ponderous sledge has thrown,
Raked up his fire, and cooled the hissing brand:
His sluice the miller shuts; and from the barn
The threshers hie, to don their Sunday coats.
Simply adorned, with ribbons, blue and pink,

[1] Harvest-home.

Bound round their braided hair, the lasses trip
To grace the feast, which now is smoaking ranged
On tables of all shape, and size, and height,
Joined awkwardly, yet to the crowded guests
A seemly joyous show, all loaded well:
But chief, at the board-head, the haggis round
Attracts all eyes, and even the goodman's grace
Prunes of its wonted length. With eager knife,
The quivering globe he then prepares to broach;
While for her gown some ancient matron quakes,
Her gown of silken woof, all figured thick
With roses white, far larger than the life,
On azure ground,—her grannam's wedding garb,
Old as that year when Sheriffmuir was fought.
Old tales are told, and well-known jests abound,
Which laughter meets half way as ancient friends,
Nor, like the worldling, spurns because thread bare.

When ended the repast, and board and bench
Vanish like thought, by many hands removed,
Up strikes the fiddle; quick upon the floor
The youths lead out the half-reluctant maids,
Bashful at first, and darning through the reels
With timid steps, till, by the music cheered,
With free and airy step, they bound along,
Then deftly wheel, and to their partners face,
Turning this side, now that, with varying step.
Sometimes two ancient couples o'er the floor,
Skim through a reel, and think of youthful years.

Meanwhile the frothing bickers,[1] soon as filled,
Are drained, and to the gauntrees[2] oft return,
Where gossips sit, unmindful of the dance.
Salubrious beverage! Were thy sterling worth

[1] Beakers.

[2] Wooden frames on which beer casks are set.—JOHNSON.

But duly prized, no more the alembic vast
Would, like some dire volcano, vomit forth
Its floods of liquid fire, and far and wide
Lay waste the land; no more the fruitful boon
Of twice ten shrievedoms, into poison turned,
Would taint the very life-blood of the poor,
Shrivelling their heart-strings like a burning scroll.

As merrily, in many a lowland vale,
These annual revels fill, with simple glee,
The husbandman, and cottar, man and child;—
Far on their homeward way, the Highland bands
Approach the mountain range, the bound sublime
Of Scotia's beauteous plains, while gleams of joy,
Not tearless, tint each face: As when the clouds,
That lowr along those steeps, slowly ascend,
And whiten, as they upward flit, in flakes

Still thin and thinner spreading, till, at last,
Each lofty summit gleams, each torrent-fall
Reflects the radiance of the setting sun.
And now, upon the way-worn traveller's ear,
The much-loved language, in his native glen,
Seems music sweet:—what joy! scarce more he feels
When, in the lowly thatch his sickle hung,
He clasps his children to his throbbing heart.

How pleasant came thy rushing, silver Tweed!
Upon my ear, when, after roaming long
In southern plains, I've reached thy lovely bank!
How bright, renowned Sark! thy little stream,
Like ray of columned light chacing a shower,
Would cross my homeward path; how sweet the sound,

When I, to hear the Doric tongue's reply,
Would ask thy well-known name!

And must I leave,
Dear land, thy bonny braes, thy dales,
Each haunted by its wizard stream, o'erhung
With all the varied charms of bush and tree;
Thy towering hills, the lineaments sublime,
Unchanged, of Nature's face, which wont to fill
The eye of Wallace, as he, musing, planned
The grand emprize of setting Scotland free!
And must I leave the friends of youthful years,
And mould my heart anew, to take the stamp
Of foreign friendships, in a foreign land,
And learn to love the music of strange tongues!—
Yes, I may love the music of strange tongues,
And mould my heart anew, to take the stamp

Of foreign friendships, in a foreign land :—
But, to my parched mouth's roof, cleave this tongue ;
My fancy fade into the yellow leaf;
And this oft-pausing heart forget to throb,
If, Scotland ! thee and thine I e'er forget.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## October.

*'Twas when the stacks get on their winter hap,*
*And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap;*
*Potatoe bings are snugged up frae skaith*
*Of coming Winter's biting frosty breath.*

BURNS.

## ARGUMENT.

*Appearance of this month—Prognostic of early frost—Turning up potatoes with the plough—Best mode of storing them—Wheat sowing—Steeping of seed—Tendency to disease in man and animals at this season—Defects in horses now most easily seen—Hints for choosing a work-horse—Hints for breaking young horses—Season for planting—Error of planting firs by way of* nurses *to other species of trees—Woods of pine—Their deformity—Misapplication of ground to fir plantations, where deciduous trees would thrive—The different soils and situations most suitable to the different species of trees—Various tints of different trees during this month—Nutting—Halloween.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## October.

Fair shines the sun, but with a meekened smile
Regretful, on the variegated woods
And glittering streams, where floats the hazel spray,
The yellow leaf, or rowan's ruby bunch.
Hushed are the groves; each woodland pipe is mute,
Save when the redbreast mourns the falling leaf.
How plaintively, in interrupted trills,
He sings the dirge of the departing year!
Of various plume and chirp, the flocking birds

Alight on hedge or bush, where, late concealed,
Their nests now hang apparent to the view.

If, 'mid the tassels of the leafless ash,
A fieldfare flock alight, for early frosts
Prepare, and timely save the precious root,
Before the penetrating power has reached
The unseen stores. If, planted in fair rows,
They marshalled grew, the plough will best perform
The reaping task: amid the tumbling soil,
The vegetable mine, exposed to view,
The gatherers' basket fills.

Some, to secure
From possibility of frost's access,
Dig pits, and there throw in the gathered crop:
A mode unwise; for thus, if water gain

Admittance to the store, there it collects,
And to itself assimilates the whole.
Exclusion of the atmosphere is gained,
As well by heaping earth above the roots,
As by interring them. Chuse, then, a spot
The driest of the field, and on the surface pile
A heap pyramidal, bedded on straw.
Let not the bulk be great, lest pressure bruise
The under-layers; and do not grudge the toil
Of subdivision into many heaps.
In thickness let the covering cone be more
Than what the strict necessity requires,
And loosely laid, save at the surface, smooth
And flattened down.

How ceaseless is the round
Of rural labour! Soon as on the field
The withered haulms and suckers crackling blaze,

And, with their far-extending volumes, load
The wings of Autumn's latest lingering breeze,
The wheaten seed-time all your care demands:
Delay not, then, but watchful seize the tide,[1]
That, ere begins the frost's severer sway,
Hostile to vegetation's earliest stage,
The fibres may have time, shooting around,
To penetrate, and fasten in the soil.

In briny pickle strong, some drench the grain,
And from the surface scum the worthless part.
When thus prepared, with lusty even growth
The embryons sprout; and, while all nature droops,
The bladed ridges, robed in tender green,
Revive the heart with presages of Spring.

[1] *Tyme*—now seldom used in that sense, except in composition with other words, as noon*tide*.

While still the ambiguous season, unconfirmed,
Retains some summer signs, yet more displays
Of Winter's near approach, man, bird, and beast,
Begin to droop, as if the waning year
Some strange malignant influence had dispensed.
Chief in the horse, each weakness, hurt, or flaw,
Which genial summer food, and genial warmth,
Will oft conceal, appears, nor can elude
Even eyes unskilled. Now is the buyer's time
To seek the crowded fair. A slow survey
First take of all the rows: examine well,
In his quiescent state, the horse that hits
Your roaming eye: mark if one foot he points,
Unfailing sign of lameness: mark his eyes,
If slumberous or alert: till well surveyed,
Forbear your hands, for, handling, you arouse
The sluggish into spirit not their own.
Of signs of strength, the least deceitful are,

A neck of muscle, which, when sideward turned,
Seems like a cable coil of some great ship,
And under it a breast jutting and broad,
Knurled like the trunk of ancient oak or elm;
Short pastern joints; full hoofs, and deep withal
Of sable hue; a waist compact and round;
Round haunch; high shoulder; head not large,
With eyes full-orbed. For temper watch his head,
And, if he greet your gently-stroking hand
With ears laid backward, and projecting snout,
Proceed elsewhere, and make another choice.

If on a horse untrained to load or draught
Your choice should fall,—by lenient, soothing means,
Tame, not subdue, his spirit to the yoke.
At first, a lightly-loaded sack, to mill
Or market, let him bear, and often stroke

His trembling neck, and cheer him with your voice.
Let not the lash, or stern command, alarm
His startled ear; but gently lead him on.—
O think how short the time, since, joyous free,
He roamed the mead, or, by his mother's side,
Attended plough or harrow, scampering gay;
And think how soon his years of youth and strength
Will fly, and leave him to that wretched doom
Which ever terminates the horse's life,—
Toil more and more severe, as age, decay,
Disease, unnerve his limbs, till, sinking faint
Upon the road, the brutal stroke resounds.

When, on the rustling pathway of the grove,
Falling from branch to branch, the frequent leaf
Gently alights, and whispers as it falls,
How short, how fleeting, is the life of man!
Then is the planting season; then the sap

Has ceased to circulate; and while the power
Of vegetation slumbering lies, the change
From the warm fostering spot, where first the plant
Put forth its leaf, remains unfelt, till Spring,
By slow degrees, awake the vital spark,
And, with a whispering zephyr, gently breathe
O'er swelling bud and slowly-spreading leaf,
A sweet oblivion of its infant couch.

Some mingle, with the fair leaf-bearing trees,
The bristled piny tribes; and, by a word
Misled, believe that thus they *nurse* the plants.
But mark the progress:----rapid is the growth
Of all the race of pines; soon they o'ertop,
O'erspread, and, like some nurses, overlay,
And choak their tender charge; or, if betimes
They're thinned, still with their taller growth they
shade,

From light and heat, the lower-spreading kinds;
And thus, surrounded by a sable ring
Of firs, as in a pit, lurks the poor oak,
Beholding but the zenith of the sky.
What tree ere throve doomed to perpetual shade?
Is warmth superfluous to the youngling plant?
Does not the genial sunbeam of the Spring
Gladden, with kindly influence, bud and spray?---
To break the blast, not to exclude the air,
And light, and heat, be that your aim, an end
That's best attained by other obvious means
Than mingling pines as nurses to your groves.
Draw them in rows along the bounding line;
And, in proportion to the planted space,
And different degrees of slope and height,
Let other piny rows athwart be drawn.

Not satisfied with using firs to screen
The leafy tribes, improvers some there are,
Enamoured of deformity and gloom,
Who strangely deem they beautify the land
By planting *woods* of pine, or sable belts,
Like funeral processions, long drawn out.
But not the eye alone these woeful groves
Offend : no cheerful rustle, like the trees
With smiling foliage clothed, give they ;
A rushing sound moans through their waving
boughs,
Grateful to him alone whose sorrow is past hope.

Nor is it only on the barren moor,
Or mountain bleak, these northern hordes intrude ;
No, they usurp the warm and sheltered glen,
Supplant the levelled bank of greenwood trees,
And, with their poisonous drop, the primrose wan,

The purple violet, the columbine,
And all the lowly children of the vale,
Both flower and flowering underwood, destroy.

Idolaters of piny groves maintain,
That no where else, when fair deciduous trees
Their foliage lose, does verdure cheer the eye.
Verdure! O word abused! does that dark range,
Dingy and sullen, sable as the cloud
That low'rs on Winter's brow, deserve the name
Of verdure?---lovely hue! that makes yon field
Of wheaten braird smile cheerful 'mid the gloom
Of Autumn's close, and threats of muttering storms.
To eyes unprejudiced by Fashion's law,
More pleasing far the leafless forest scene,
Whether beneath the storm it undulate
A deep-empurpled sea, or tranquil rest

In moveless beauty, while the frosty power
Adorns each spray and twig with fleecy plumes.

Let lovers of the forest first consult
The nature of the ground. A moist abode
Best suits the willow tribes, yet will they thrive
In any soil. The alder, too, prefers
A station dank; chiefly the river side
It loves to haunt, down to the very brink,
Rooted oft-times beneath the gliding stream,
While round each tree a kindred bush upsprings.
In moist, not swampy soils, the elm delights:
No tree bears transplantation like the elm;
With sure success the elm may be removed,
Even when the twentieth spring draws forth the buds.
No scanty foliage, no decaying twigs,

Betóken signs of change: clinging to life,
An elm-tree stake puts forth young shoots, and spreads
Its verdant foliage in the gap it fills.
The dry hill-side, though sterile be the mould,
Delights the beechen tree. In every soil,
Or warm or cold, or moist or dry, the birch
Will rear its smooth and glossy stem, and spread
Its odoriferous foliage. Loamy moulds
Best suit the ash; yet will it thrive in all,
Save in stiff clays, or in the oozy swamp.
The monarch of the woods delights in plains
And valley sides, nor shuns the mountain's brow;
Regardless of the storm, the oak's vast limbs
Stretch equal all around, and scorn the blast:
So, when transformed into the floating towers,
That bear Britannia's thunder o'er the deep,
Heaved on the mountain billows, they defy

The elemental war, the battle's strife,
And proudly quell the storm of flood and fire.
But fitter far such themes for him who sung
*Ye Mariners of England!* in a strain
More grand, inspired, than e'er from Grecian lyre
Or Roman flowed,—that bard of soul sublime,
Who, in prophetic vision, dared to light
The torch of Hope at Nature's funeral pile!

Meeter for me, amid the rustling leaves,
To trace the woodland path, and mark the tints
So varied, yet harmonious, that adorn
The trees retentive of their summer robes:—
The beech of orange hue; the oak embrowned;
The yellow elm; the sycamore so red;
The alder's verdure deep, of all the trees
The latest to disrobe; the hazle, hung
With russet clusters:—hark! that crashing branch,

As to the maid he loves, the clambering youth
Down weighs the husky store; while others catch,
With hooked rods, the highest slender sprays,
And bend them to some upward stretching hand,
Or shake the ripened shower, and, dexterous, twitch,
From the fair bosom's shield, the blushing prize.
One climbs the precipice's crag, and stretches,
Dizzying the gazer's eye, in dread attempt,
His arm, to reach some richly-clustered branch;
And though he's foiled, perhaps a trembling voice,
And upturned eye, with eager clasping hands,
Make disappointment sweet, and first confess
A mutual flame which oft the tongue denied.

And now they bear the woodland harvest home,
And store it up for blythesome Hallowe'en,
A night of mirth and glee to old and young.

With the first star that twinkles in the east,
From house to house, joyous, the schoolboys bear
Their new-pulled stocks, while, 'mid the curled
blades,
A few dim candles in derision shine
Of Romish rites, now happily forgot.
As each goes out, the bearer homeward hies,
And 'twixt the lintel and the thatch, lays up
The well singed emblem of his future mate.
Then round the fire, full many a cottage ring
Cheerful convenes, to burn the boding nuts.
Some lovingly, in mutual flames, consume,
Till, wasting into embers grey, (sign of long life
Together spent,) they cause sometimes the event
Believed to be foretold; some, when thrown in,
Exploding, bound away, as if they spurned
Their proffered partner. Marion to the wood,
Thus slighted, hied, from rowan-tree two-stemmed,

A sprig to pull: with quaking heart she passed
The gloomy firs, the lightning-shivered oak,
The ruined mill, all silent 'neath the moon.
Oft did she pause, and once she would have turned,
As cross her path the startled howlet flew,
Sailing along, but, from an aged thorn,
The stock-dove faintly coo'd beside his mate ;---
Forward she sped, and with the dear-won prize,
Breathless, returned, nor waited long, till, lo,
A sister-spray adorned her true-love's breast.
And now, by turns, the laughing circle strives,
Plunging, to catch the floating fruit, that still
Eludes the attempt ; nor is the triple spell
Of dishes, ranged to cheat the groping hand,
Forgot, nor aught of all the various sports
Which hoar tradition hands from age to age.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## November.

*While tumbling, brown, the burn comes down,*
*And roars frae bank to brae;*
*And bird and beast in covert rest,*
*And pass the heartless day.*

BURNS.

## ARGUMENT.

*Early arrival of the woodcock a prognostic of an early and severe winter—Grass-fields to be saved from poaching at this season—Ploughing of old leas—Care of the team—Turnip-fields staked off for sheep—An adjoining grass-field necessary for sheep during the night—A serene night—A hazy night—Various appearances of* Will-a-Wisp—*Night-scene at sea in tropical regions—Cottage-fireside—Serene morning—Hoar-frost—Withered aspect of sward, except at fountain brinks and rills—Hence the idea of irrigation—The means of irrigation very general in Britain—Sketches of this mode of improvement.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## November.

While wind and rain drive through the half-
stripped trees,
Fanners and flails go merrily in the barn.
Each brook and river sweeps along deep tinged,
While down the glen, louder and quicker, sounds
The busy mill-clack. On the woodland paths
No more the leaves rustle, but matted lie,
All drenched and soiled; the foliage of the oak,
Blent with the lowliest leaves that decked the brier,
Or creeping bramble, mouldering to decay.

Oft at this season, near an oozy spring,
O'erhung by alder boughs, the woodcock haunts;
(Sure harbinger, when thus so early come,
Of early winter tedious and severe)
There he imbibes his watery food; till, scared
By man and dog, upward, on pinion strong,
He springs, and o'er the summits of the grove,
Flies far, unless, flashing, the quick-aimed tube
Arrest his flight, and bring him lifeless down,
With his long bleeding bill sunk in the marsh.

From hawless thorn to brier, the chirping flocks
Flit shivering, while, behind yon naked hedge,
Drooping, the cattle stand, waiting the hour
When to the shed or stall they shall return.

Ye who, on Spring's return, a smooth thick
sward

Upon your fields would see, must spare them now.
At sunny intervals, you may indulge
Your prisoned herd to pick the withering blade,
And the fresh breeze inhale, or to the bank
Of the swollen river wend, to quench their thirst.
But if your soil be clay, let not a hoof
E'er cross your fields, save when the frosty power
Has hardened them against the poaching hoof.

Old leas may now be ploughed, though on the plough
Patters the hail shower, whitening all the ridge.
But loose betimes, and through the shallow pond
Drive the tired team; then bed them snug and warm;
And with no stinting hand their toil reward.
Assiduous care the waning year requires,
For then all animated nature tends

To sickliness and death. Much it imports
To cleanse each hoof and pastern; but beware
Of clipping close the fetlock, robbing thus
The fretted skin of Nature's simple fence
Against the contact of the encrusting soil.

While on the turnip field, in portions due
Staked off, the bleating flock their juicy meal,
Nibbling, partake, let not their nightly lair
Be on the mould; but give them free access
To some adjoining field, where, on the sward,
A drier bed shortens the winter night.

Oft, after boisterous days, the rack glides off,
And night serene succeeds, cloudless and calm,
Unrolling all the glories of the sky.
Who would regret the shortened winter day,
Which shrouds, in light, that spectacle sublime!

Who would regret the summer landscape's charm!
O bounteous night! to every eye that rolls,—
Whether retired in rural solitudes,
Or to thronged cities, or to desert shores
Exiled,---thou spread'st that sight superb,
And through the hopeless heart shoot'st gleams of joy.
Thou shew'st to weary man his glorious home.
As on that happy eve, when peals of peace
(Ah, short-lived peace!) rang through Britannia's realms,
The homeward veteran, as he weary gained
Some mountain brow, beheld, far through the gloom,
His native city all one blaze of light;
Joy filled his eyes with tears, joy nerved his limbs,
That now, at last, to all whom he held dear,
He should return, and never more depart.

Sometimes November nights are thick bedimmed
With hazy vapours, floating o'er the ground,
Or veiling from the view the starry host.
At such a time, on plashy mead or fen
A faintish light is seen, by southern swains
Called *Will-a-Wisp :* Sometimes, from rushy bush
To bush it leaps, or, cross a little rill,
Dances from side to side in winding race;
Sometimes, with stationary blaze, it gilds
The heifer's horns; or plays upon the mane
Of farmer's horse returning from the fair,
And lights him on his way; yet often proves
A treacherous guide, misleading from the path
To faithless bogs, and solid-seeming ways.
Sometimes it haunts the church-yard; up and down
The tomb-stone's spiky rail streaming, it shews
Faint glimpses of the rustic sculptor's art,—

Time's scythe and hour-glass, and the grinning
skull,
And bones transverse, which, at an hour like this,
To him, who, passing, casts athwart the wall
A fearful glance, speak with a warning knell.—
Sometimes to the lone traveller it displays
The murderer's gibbet, and his tattered garb,
As lambently along the links it gleams.

While harmlessly, in northern regions, play
These fires phosphoric, in the tropic climes
The midnight hours are horribly illumed
With sheeted lightning; bright the expanding flame
Reddens the boiling ocean wave, and clear
Displays the topmast cordage, where on high
The ship-boy, trembling, hands the gleaming ropes;
While at the helm, appalled, the steersman scans

The reeling compass, or, despairing, sees
The shivered mast; or, in his eyes, receives
The searing flash, and rolls the extinguished orbs,
And wishes, but in vain, that once again
He could behold the horrors of the storm.

Even such a man I've seen by cottage fire,
Relating to the child, that on his knee
Played with his visage sorrowful, yet mild,
The wonders of the deep, while busy wheels
And distaffs stop, and every ear and eye
Drinks in the dreadful tale, and many a tear
Is shed by her whose truelove ploughs the main.
Then homebred histories but sport appear :—
Some tell how witches, circling mossy cairns,
Far o'er the heath, dance till the moon arise,
Or on the martyr's stone their horrid feast
Set out, in dead men's skulls for dishes ranged.

Perhaps the fairy gambols are the theme,---
How hand in hand, around the broomy knowe,
Beneath the silver moon, they featly trip;
Or, by some roofless mill, their revels hold
Upon the millstone lying on the green;
Or o'er the filmy ice (to their light steps
A floor of adamant) thrid through the dance,
With shadowy heel to heel reflected clear,---
Till, harsh, the tower-perched howlet screech a note
Discordant with aerial minstrelsy,
Or o'er the moon a cloud begins to float,
Then, with the flying beam, before the shade,
In gleamy dance, they shoot o'er hill and dale.

Amid November's gloom, a morn serene
Will sometimes intervene, o'er cottage roof,
And grassy blade, spreading the hoarfrost bright,
That crackles crisp when marked by early foot;

But soon, beneath the sun-beam, melts away
The beauteous crustwork, leaving the blanched sward
Hung, as with dew-drops on a summer's morn.
Alas, the impearled sward no summer tint
Displays; withered it lies, or faintly tinged
With sickly verdure, save by fountain brink,
Or margin of some slowly flowing rill:
There, through the Winter's cold and Summer's heat,
A vivid verdure winds, in contrast marked
With Nature's faded charms, like fresh festoons
Of summer-flowers on waning Beauty's brow.
In spots like these, the last of Autumn's flowers
Droop, lingering; there the earliest snow-drop peeps.
Hence Irrigation's power at first was learnt,
A custom ancient, yet but rarely used

In cold and watery climes; though even there
No mode of melioration has been found
Of more effect, or with more ease obtained.

Through various regions of Britannia's isle,
In every field are found abundant means
Of irrigation: every brawling brook,
Or tinkling runnel, offers copious draughts
Of watery nutriment, the food of plants.
But only then 'tis useful, when the land
Is dry by nature, art, or seasons fair;
And chiefly when in herbage for the scythe,
Or browsing lip.

A free and porous soil
Upon a gravelly bed, at all times drinks,
Yet ne'er is quenched.—Who owns a soil like this,
If through his fields a little mountain-stream,

Not sunk in channel deep, but murmuring down
'Tween gently-sloping banks, a mine of wealth
Possesses in that stream: A dam, half stone
Half turf, athwart he rears, then from each side,
Along his fields he slanting conduits draws,
Which, with a flow scarce visible, supply
The smaller branches, till o'er all his leas,
And meadows green, he, in a summer day,
Spreads the whole stream, leaving the channel bare,—
Save at some little pools, where, lurking, lie
The fearful trouts, that from the schoolboy's hand
Seek refuge vain, 'neath stones or shelving rock.

Nor is it only in the sultry months
He leads the freshening fertilizing lymph.
Even in this humid month he overflows
The withering grass, but soon again withdraws

The streams prolific: deep the verdure sprouts
In close luxuriance; daisies bud anew,
And to the sloping wintry beam half ope
Their crimson-tinted flow'rets, closing soon;
For soon they, shrinking, feel 'tis not the breath
Of early Spring, that woos them to unfold.

In grounds, by art laid dry, the aqueous bane
That marred the wholesome herbs, is turned to use;
And drains, while drawing noxious moisture off,
Serve also to diffuse a due supply.

Some soils of clay, obdurately compact,
Foil every effort of the draining art.
Deluged in weeping seasons, they retain
The falling floods; each furrow is a pool.
There irrigation serves no useful end,

Unless in summer drouths, and, at such times,
No land more needs the irrigating aid.
For clay, though ranked among the humid soils,
Is in itself the driest of them all:
The cloud-descended water it retains,
But yet excludes, and on the surface bears;
Which soon, as by the fervid summer beam
Exhaled, leaves the unmoistened soil to cling
Around each root, and yawn with many a cleft.

Some level fields, through all the winter months,
Are covered warmly with a watery sheet:
Here a rich sward upshoots of lively green,
Till stopt by contact with its icy roof;
And, when at last, upon a sunny morn,
While vernal breezes curl the smooth expanse,
The liquid veil withdraws,—a reeking mist

Mantles the plain, till Zephyr gently sweep
The rolling wreaths away, unfolding wide
A verdant carpet broider'd o'er with flowers.

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## December.

*" The sweeping blast, the sky o'er-cast,"*
*The joyless Winter day,*
*Let others fear, to me more dear*
*Than all the pride of May.*

BURNS.

## ARGUMENT.

*Wind and sleet—A cottage in ruins—Whirlwinds—Secure thatch of stacks and house—Snow—Recommendation to strew food for birds—Their use to the farmer in destroying insects—The red-breast—The sun appearing faintly through clouds—The labourer—His home employments during the day—His cheerful fireside—A contrast—Country deserted by those who possessed the power of mitigating the hardships of the peasant's lot—Resort to towns—Dissipation—A rout—The theatre—A concert—Superior enjoyment of those who observe the good old hospitality of Christmas in the country—Hoggmanay—Various customs—A midnight storm—Dawn—Conclusion.*

# BRITISH GEORGICS.

## December.

Loud raves the blast, and, snell, the sleety showers
Drive over hill and dale with hurrying sweep.
The leafless boughs all to one point are bent,
And the lithe beech-tops horizontal stream,
Like shivered pennon from some dipping mast.
Dismal the wind howls through yon thatchless roof,
The cottage skeleton, from whence exiled,
The inmates pine in some dark city lane,
Thinking of that dear desolated home,

Where many a summer sun they saw go down ;
Where many a winter night, around the fire,
They heard the storm rave o'er the lowly roof.
Forlorn it stands. Ah, who is he that views
The ruin drear, still wandering round and round,
With doubting aspect, yet with watery eye !
Fain would he disbelieve it is the place
Where he, in innocence and humble peace,
His infancy and youth had happy spent,
Till, lured away, he left his parents sad,
And sought the sea, anticipating oft
His glad return to aid their downward years :
And now returned, with expectation full,
To greet each kinsman's gladdened face, and share
His hard-won treasure with the friends he loved,
And visit all his boyish haunts, he finds, instead,
All desolate : in speechless gaze, awhile

He stands, then turns in agony and weeps,
In bitterness of soul,—as when a bird,
A roaming gone for food to feed her young,
Returning to the well-known bush, beholds
A mossy tuft, where once had hung her nest,—
Drooping, she perches on her wonted spray,
Then, in a plaintive strain, repeated oft,
Monotonous, laments her piteous lot.

On brier and thorn, some straggling hips and haws
Still linger, while, behind the leafless hedge
Cowring, the sheep stand fixed in rueful gaze.
Oft now, a whirlwind, eddying down the vale,
Uncovers stacks, or on the cottage roof
Seizing amain, sweeps many a wisp aloft,
High vanishing amid the hurrying clouds.

At such a time, oft to your stackyard look,
And smooth the slightest ruffling of the thatch,
Binding it firmly down with added coils.
To guard your roof against the furrowing gust,
The harrows, till a calmer hour arrive,
Fencing the weaker parts, will save the whole.

When broadened hovering flakes begin to wheel,
And whiten hill and vale, the fowler lays
His treacherous lure, and watches till he see
The scattered snow raised by some fluttering wing,
Then forward darts to seize his captive prey.
Strew rather thou the food without the snare!
A little sprinkling saves, from Famine's power,
Full many a beauteous songster, whose sweet pipe,
In early spring, repays the trifling boon.
But songs are not the sole return they make:

Foes of the insect race through every change,—
The embryotic egg, in bark or leaf
Deposited; the maggot, chrysalis,
And winged bane, they ceaselessly destroy.

Of all the feathered tribes, that flock around
The house or barn for shelter and for food,
The redbreast chiefly,—sweetest trustful bird,---
Demands protection from the coming storm.
Your open window then with crumbs bestrew,
Inviting entrance;---soon he'll venture in
And hop around, nor fear at last to perch
Upon the distaff of the humming wheel,
Cheering with summer songs the winter day.

At times the fall abates, and low, through clouds,
The struggling sun his dim and shapeless disk

Faintly displays, wan as a watery moon,
And almost tempts the labourer to his task.
But, when he sees the transient beam withdrawn,
He shuts again his door, and turns his hand
To home employment,---mending now a hive,
With bark of brier darned pliant through the seams;
Or, looking forward through the wintry gloom
To summer days, and meadows newly mown,
Repairs his toothless rake; or feeds his bees;
Or drives a nail into his studded shoon;
Or twists a wisp, and winds the spiral steps
Around the henroost ladder; deeply fixed,
Meanwhile, his children quit their play, and stand
With look enquiring, and enquiring tongue,
Admiring much his skill. Thus glides the day;
Thus glide the evening hours, when laid to rest

His imps are stilled, and with its deep-toned hum
The wool-wheel joins the excluded tempest's howl.
Perhaps some neighbour braves the blast, and cheers
The fire-side ring; then blaze the added peats,
Or moss-dug faggot, brightening roof and wall,
And rows of glancing plates that grace the shelves.
The jest meanwhile, or story of old times,
Goes cheery round; or, from some well-soiled page,
Are read the deeds of heroes, by the light
Mayhap of brands, whereon, when greenwood trees
Were all their canopy, their armour hung.

Alas! in many a cottage no bright blaze
Cheers the low roof; but cowring, shivering, round
The semblance of a fire, a single peat,
Or bunch of gathered sticks, that scarce return

A feeble glimmer to the fanning breath,
The inmates, poor, pine the long eve away.
Perhaps around the couch of pain they wait,
And minister in darkness to the sick;
Or sad, upon a deathbed watching, lean,
And only know the parting moment past
By the cold lip, the cold and stiffening hand.

Ah me! the rural vale deserted lies,
By those who hold the power to mitigate
The hardships of the peasant's humble lot.
To cities fled, they listless haunt the rounds
Of dissipation, falsely pleasure called.
The crowded route blazes with dazzling glare
Of multitudinous lights, a senseless shew,
Of insipidity the very shrine.
From groupe to groupe behold the trifler range;

Now listening to the nothings of the fair;
Now telling, o'er and o'er, to each new audience,
Some new intelligence which all have heard,
Or meagre jest, picked from the very crumbs
And scraps he gathered at some witling's board:
Or mark his counterpart, the languid maid,
Affecting apathy beyond that share
Which Nature, with no stinted hand, bestowed.
Another, sensitive all o'er, would shrink,
Or seem to shrink, from view, yet is attired,---
Like flower in hoar-frost veiled, whose every leaf,
And every tiny fold, and bosom fair,
Is obvious to the eye, though hid its hue.

See some o'erlook the hushed divan, who stake
A village on the turning of a card.

Or does the crowded theatre precede
These midnight orgies? there, too, Folly rules,
And crowns her votaries with ephemeral bays,---
While far apart, the Tragic Muse, inspired
By Shakespeare's spirit, speaking from a cloud
Of thunder, meditates her lofty theme,
And awes, or melts, by turns, a listening world.

Perhaps the feast of music draws the crowd,
Who, glutted even to surfeit, still with praise,
With yawning admiration, daub the man,
That, with bold fingers, gloriously ascends
Three straw-breadths higher, on the tortured string,
Than his compeers, and thence extracts
A squeak, a little squeak, that much delights,---
Because less grating than most other squeaks.

Such are the scenes which rob the wintry months
Of those, whom duty, interest, pleasure, call
A country life to lead. How far surpass
The pleasures which the few, who still observe
The good old customs of the Christmas tide;
Who see their halls with happy faces thronged,
The rich, the poor, the old and young, all joined
In social harmony,---how far surpass
Their pleasures, those extracted from the round
Of city life, from various sameness, dull
Laborious merriment, and all the salves,
The antidotes against the bane of Time!

Of all the festive nights which customs old,
And waning fast, have made the poor man's own,
The merriest of them all is Hoggmanay.
Then from each cottage window, 'mid the gloom,

A brighter ray shoots through the falling flakes,---
And glimmering lanterns gleam, like Will-a-Wisp
Athwart the fields, or, mounting over stiles,
Evanish suddenly: no dread is now
Of walking wraith, or witch, or cantrip fell;
For Superstition's self this night assumes
A smiling aspect, and a fearless mien,
And tardy Prudence slips the leash from Joy.
To meeting lovers now no hill is steep,
No river fordless, and no forest dark;
And when they meet, unheeded sweeps the blast,
Unfelt the snow, as erst from summer thorn,
Around them fell a shower of fading flowers,
Shook by the sighing of the evening breeze.

With smutted visages, from house to house,
In country and in town, the guisarts range,

And sing their madrigals, though coarse and rude,
With willing glee that penetrates the heart.
O ! it delights my heart, that unstained joy
Of thoughtless boyhood. Spurn you from my door !---
No, no, rush freely in, and share my fire,
And sing through all your roll of jovial lilts.

But older folks their chairs and stools draw in
Around the fire, and form a circle blythe.
With riddles quaint, and tricks, and ancient tales,
They pass the time, while oft the reaming horn,
From hand to hand passed round, arrests midway
The story-teller in his long-spun tale,---
Which, not thus baulked, he soon again resumes,
And interweaves full many an episode.

The temperate banquet done, their several homes

Timely they seek, resolved, ere morning dawn,
With smoking pints, to greet friends, lovers, kin.

Some blyther bevies, till the midnight hour,
Around the cheerful board their mirth protract,
To drink a welcome to the good new year;
Then crossing arms, with hands enlinked all round,
All voices join in some old song, and full
The tide of friendly harmony o'erflows!

December, all thy aspects have their charm;
The sky o'ercast, the sweeping rack, the calm
And cloudless day, when reeling midges warp
In sunny nook; yea, even the raving storm.

I love the music of the midnight storm,
When wild, careering, drive the winds and rains,

And loud and louder, through the sounding grove,
The Spirit of the Tempest seems to howl,
And loud and louder beats the furious blast,
As if some giant hand, with doubling strokes,
Struck the strong wall, and shook it to its base.
Awful the mustering pause, when all is hushed
Save the fierce river's roar! How cheering now
And heartening, sounds the crow of Morning's
bird!
How deep the darkness! save when sudden gleams
Dazzle the eye, that ventures to explore
The awful secrets of the solemn hour.

Gradual the storm abates, and welcome peeps
The long-expected dawn, gloomy at first,
But tinging by degrees, with copper hue,
The slowly flying clouds. Most pleasant hour

Of daybreak ! at all seasons fraught with gladness,
Whether the sun in summer splendour rise,
Hailed by a thousand choristers on wing
Suspended high, or perched on dewy bough ;
Or whether, through the wintry lowring sky,
He shoots his watery beam far from the south,---
Thou makest the heart of all that lives expand,
Man, bird, and beast, with joy ; but chiefly man,
As looking with complacent eye around,
On this grand frame of things slowly illumed,
He worships, not in words, but heavenward thoughts,
Submiss and lowly, that vast power which launched,
Impels this mighty mass, and guides it round,---
True to its annual and diurnal course ;---
Stupendous miracle !---this mighty mass
Hurled loose, through realms immense of trackless space,

With speed, compared to which the viewless ball,
Projected from the cannon's mouth, but creeps
At a snail's pace, yet without shock or pause,
Or deviation infinitely small,
Rolling along, with motion unperceived,
As if it moveless lay on Ether's tide.

# NOTES.

# NOTES ON JANUARY.

## Note I.

———*Thy various voice,*
*That to the heart, with eloquence divine, &c.*—P. 4.

———" O, mysterious Night !
" Thou art not silent; many tongues hast thou."
JOANNA BAILLIE.

## Note II.

———*the first-foot's entering step.*—P. 5.

" It is supposed that the welfare and prosperity of every family, especially the fair part of it, depend very much upon the character of the person who is *first* admitted into the house on the beginning of the new year. Hence every suspected person is carefully excluded ; and the lasses generally engage beforehand some favoured youth, who willingly comes, happy in being honoured with that signal mark of female distinction."—Notes to NICOL's *Poems, penes* JAMIESON's *Dictionary.*

## Note III.

*———The steaming flaggon, borne*
*From house to house.*—P. 5.

This is called a *het-pint*, " a hot-beverage, which it is customary for young people to carry with them from house to house on new-year's eve, or early in the morning of the new year."—JAMIESON'S *Dict.*

## Note IV.

*A hedge full grown, if with a hedge now joined,*
*Or circling belt, the climate of your field*
*Improves, transmutes from bleak and shivering cold*
*To genial warmth.*—P. 8.

" In a mountainous country, and in bleak moorish situations, nothing tends more to encrease the value of the soil, than plantations properly distributed. They give shelter both to the cattle and to the corn crops; and by preventing the warmth which is produced by proper manures, and by the germination of vegetables, from being dissipated, they give effect to all the efforts of industry. Accordingly, in such situations, plantations are no sooner reared, than the whole face of the country round them assumes an improving aspect, and displays a richer verdure. When suddenly cut down, in consequence of the necessities of an im-

provident proprietor, the reverse of all this occurs. Vegetation is chilled by the piercing blasts which now meet with no resistance, and the cattle droop from want of shelter; so that in a few years the place can scarcely be known."—FORSYTH, vol. ii. p. 365.

## Note V.

———*For there a vivid green*
*Tinges your early sward, there lingers long.*—P. 8.

Shelter not only makes the grass spring early, and return its verdure late, and thus produces an additional quantity of food for cattle; but it also makes less food necessary. Nothing whets the appetite so much as cold; and one reason is, that an additional stimulus is necessary to keep up the animal heat. Hence a cow or a horse, exposed on a bleak lea to every wind that blows, will eat twice as much food as one whose pasture range is well protected by trees or hedges; and yet the effect of this additional quantity of nourishment will not be perceptible in fattening the animal. The additional stimulus, and the vital energy which that stimulus excites, are partly expended in producing a quite different effect, viz. preserving the animal from the cold. In the same way, a plant or tree, growing in an exposed situation, will be slow of growth and stunted, compared to others of the same species planted in a soil of the same quality, but protected from the winds.

But hedges and plantations ought not to be viewed as merely *local* improvements of this or that particular property. It is obvious, that when they are general over the face of a country, that *country* must be less injured by high winds than an open one. What is the violence of the wind owing to at sea, or on the sea-shore, when the wind blows from the sea, or on the top of a mountain, but to the want of obstacles presenting repeated checks to its violence? When free of such obstacles, *vires acquirit eundo.*

## Note VI

*List not to him, who says that sheltered fields*
*Suffer from lack of air, &c* —P. 10.

There is, no doubt, a degree in which shelter may be injurious. In a flat low country, if *small* fields be surrounded with hedge-rows, grain crops will be injured by the want of a free circulation of air. At the same time, there is often more of fancy than sound reason in the apprehension, that hedge-rows are on the whole hurtful. Shelter merely produces an artificial calm; that is, it retards the current of the air; but while it retards, it certainly never can stop the current. Neither can it prevent, what is of more consequence to the health of animal as well as vegetable life, the imperceptible change of one *stratum* of the atmosphere with another. This is constantly going on by the ascent of the lower and warmer *strata*, and the descent of the higher and colder. I have often wondered, how the air, in the heart of so extensive a city as London, continued at all fit for respiration

during hot, calm, summer weather; but the constant interchange between the lower and higher regions of the air accounts for this.

## Note VII.

*Then see their nightly* lair *be warm and clean.*—P. 17.

According to Johnson, *lair* signifies "*the couch of a boar, or wild-beast.*" He is evidently under a mistake in giving the word this limited signification; and into this mistake he seems to have been led by his conjectural etymology, viz. that the word is derived from *lai*, a French word signifying a *sow* or a *forest;* whereas the word is evidently formed from the preterite *lay* of the verb to *lie*. The very authority which Johnson quotes is in direct opposition to the idea, that the word signifies exclusively the couch of a wild-beast.

"————————thy care must now proceed
To teeming females and the promised breed;
First let them run at large, and never know
The taming yoke, or draw the crooked plough:
Let them not leap the ditch, or swim the flood;
Or lumber o'er the meads; or cross the wood:
But range the forest, by the silver side
Of some cool stream, where Nature shall provide
Green grass and fattening clover for their fare;
And mossy caverns for their noon-tide *lair.*"

DRYDEN'S *Geor.* iii. l. 225. 233.

In another passage, the word *lair* is explicitly used to denote the couch of domestic animals *within doors*.

" Next, let thy goats officiously be nursed,
And led to living streams, to quench their thirst.
Feed them with winter browze, and, for their *lair*,
A cote, that opens to the south, prepare."
*Geor.* iii. l. 473.

## Note VIII.

———*Nor is it wasteful care :*
*For thus, 'gainst Spring's return, &c.*—P. 17.

" As to litter, it is an object of such importance, that provision for the system should be gradually made through the winter, if corn enough be not left for summer-threshing to supply the beasts. All wheat-stubbles should be cut and stacked; leaves, in woodland countries, should be collected; fern procured from commons and warrens; rushes and aquatic weeds stored from fens, &c.; and, if nothing else can be had, heaps of sand formed for this use; for which peat also is excellent. An enterprising, vigilant farmer, when he has such an object as this in view, will exert every nerve to be prepared for a system, the profit of which will depend so much on the care previously taken to be well provided with litter of some sort or other."—YOUNG's *Farmer's Calendar*, May.

The management of litter in the dunghill is often very absurd. It is well known, that, without moisture, straw will remain in the state of straw for a very long time. Now, many farmers, by way of having a very *neat* dunghill, build it up like a *stack*. I have seen some of these dung-stacks

ten feet in height. The consequence is, that the little moisture which the litter has brought with it from the stable, soon sinks to the bottom, or evaporates. From such dunghills the farmer may be rather said to thatch than to manure his fields.

## Note IX.

*Scared from her reedy citadel, the swan, &c.*—P. 23.

The beautiful loch of Duddingston has for several ages been the habitation of swans. That their settlement there is not of very recent date, there is the following curious piece of evidence. "*March* 6. 1688. At privy-council, the Duchess of Lauderdale pursues Sir James Dick of Priestfield for a riot, in so far as she having taken out of Duddingston loch five of the swans, which, or *their parents*, were put in by her lord; he took them back again except two; for which he broke up doors, which no constable, by the act of parliament 1661, is allowed to do. *2do*, He could not *sibi jus dicere.—Alledged*, The swans were his own, he standing infeft in the loch, and consequently in all that fed on it; and though they were *ferœ naturœ*, yet they were like wild beasts inclosed in his park, or fish in his ponds; and though the first were put in by the Duke of Lauderdale, yet the product was Sir James's. The Lords of Privy-Council found, If they had come of their own accord, and *bigged* (built) there, that they were Sir James's; but since the owner who put them in was known, they found they belonged to the Duchess; and that Sir James's tolerance to let them stay in

his loch, did not make them his. Upon which he turned all the rest out of his loch. But Duke Hamilton *alleging*, that the loch bounded with the King's-park, and so belonged to him, he put them in again; and thus took possession, in the king's name, of the loch; which will cost Sir James a declarator of property to clear his right."--FOUNTAINHALL'S *Decisions*, vol. i. p. 501.

## Note X.

———*The long-expected tryst,*
*To play their yearly bonspiel.*---P. 23.

" *Bonspel*, a match at the diversion of *curling* on the ice, between two opposite parishes."---JAMIESON'S *Dict.*

## Note XI.

*Dear to the peasant's heart his fire-side blaze,*
*And floor new swept, to greet his glad return.*—P. 26.

" At e'en, when he comes weary frae the hill,
I'll ha'e a' things made ready to his will:
In winter, when he toils through wind and rain,
A bleezing ingle and a clean hearth-stane.
As soon as he flings by his plaid and staff,
The seething-pot's be ready to tak' aff."—

GENTLE SHEPHERD.

## Note XII.

*And shakes the frame, when Fawdon's ghost appears.*---P. 27.

The increasing loudness of the horn, that preceded the approach of Fawdon's ghost, is well imagined and well described:

> " When that allayne Wallace was levit there,
> The awful blast aboundit meikle mair."
>
> *History of Sir William Wallace,* book v. l. 187.

The history of Wallace by Henry, commonly called Blind Harry, is a standard book in the small collection of the Scottish peasant. Of this book Burns, in a short sketch which he gives of his early years, addressed to Dr Moore, thus expresses himself: " The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there, till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest." I have no doubt that many of the noblest strains of Scotia's lyre, as well as the most splendid achievements of her warriors, have had their origin in the lay of this ancient minstrel.

## Note XIII.

*This is no tale which fabling poet dreams.*---P. 27.

For the general truth of the picture which I have drawn,

I appeal to the excellent remarks on the peasantry of Scotland, with which Dr Currie has prefaced his Life of Burns. He there says, " A slight acquaintance with the peasantry of Scotland will serve to convince an unprejudiced observer, that they possess a degree of intelligence not generally found among the same class of men in the other countries of Europe. In the very humblest condition of the Scottish peasants every one can read, and most persons are more or less skilled in writing and arithmetic; and under the disguise of their uncouth appearance, and of their peculiar manners and dialect, a stranger will discover that they possess a curiosity, and have obtained a degree of information, corresponding to these acquirements.

" These advantages they owe to the legal provision made by the parliament of Scotland, in 1646, for the establishment of a school in every parish throughout the kingdom, for the express purpose of educating the poor; a law which may challenge comparison with any act of legislation to be found in the records of history, whether we consider the wisdom of the ends in view, the simplicity of the means employed, or the provisions made to render these means effectual to their purpose. This excellent statute was repealed on the accession of Charles II. in 1660, together with all the other laws passed during the commonwealth, as not being sanctioned by the royal assent. It slept during the reigns of Charles and James, but was re-enacted, precisely in the same terms, by the Scottish parliament, after the revolution in 1696; and this is the last provision on the subject."

In the opinion which immediately follows, viz. that the

effects of parish schools " may be considered to have commenced about the period of the Union," I think Dr Currie is under a mistake. The institution itself commenced in the year 1616, under the authority of an act of privy council; that regulation was enacted into a law in the year 1633; and though the mode provided for the execution of the law was not the most efficient, the inclination of the country coincided so completely with the views of the legislature, that parish-schools were soon very generally established throughout the Lowlands of Scotland. The act 1646, too, which contains the very provisions that were the law of the land till very lately, was in full force and observance for fourteen years previous to the Restoration; and so powerfully had it, and the previous act of parliament 1633, and act of privy council 1616, operated on the general diffusion of instruction, that in the Lowlands, soon after the Restoration, there were very few persons of mature years who could not read. This fact is noticed by Woddrow, a writer of unquestionable veracity. I have looked for the passage without being able to find it. My recollection of it, however, is distinct to the extent I have mentioned; and I think that *writing* is stated as having been also a very general accomplishment.

## Note XIV.

*Deny the right of Englishmen to read.*—P. 29.

It is perfectly plain, that without the institution of parish schoolmasters, supported partly, as in Scotland, at the expence of the public, a great proportion of the children of the lower classes of the people of England must, for want of the means of instruction, remain unable to read. I am far from asserting, that the plan of public instruction lately offered to parliament, by an able, an upright, and independent senator, was a perfect one. It was thought to be far too complicated in its details. The bill, however, was resisted on the *general principle*, that the populace ought not to receive school-education from the public; and, what is most strange, this resistance was made (if newspaper reports are to be depended on,) by a member whose benevolence is well known, and whose commanding talents have, in one eminent instance, been exerted in behalf of a numerous and most meritorious body of the people. I allude to the act of parliament introducing enlistment for limited service,—a statute which, while it is admirably contrived for improving the safe efficiency of the vast machine of our national defence, is (at least was) of more essential importance to the rights and liberties of the commons at large, as well as of the army itself, than any law that has been enacted for half a century.

It may not be improper here to mention, that the earnest desire of the people of England to avail themselves of opportunities of instruction, as well as the miserable deficiency of such opportunities, is most strikingly illustrated by a circumstance that sometimes occurs, when detachments of English regiments are quartered in the small towns and villages of Scotland. It is then not uncommon to see (and a deeply interesting sight it is) the men, with their side-arms, sitting on the same forms, or at the same desks, with children, learning to read and write.

Some persons consider the general diffusion of a little learning as chiefly useful in enabling men to raise themselves above the condition in which they were born. so far agree with this opinion, as to think that a general diffusion of learning gives genius a fair start, which otherwise it might not have. But I think the chief advantage of that state of knowledge which exists in Scotland, is the happiness which it tends to confer on men being and remaining in those spheres in which they were born and bred.

In the estimation of some persons, "The great mass of the people are as so many teeth in the wheels of a piece of machinery, of no further value than as they serve to facilitate its movements."—Mrs HAMILTON.

# NOTES ON FEBRUARY.

## Note I.

———*The sunny side*
*Of gentle slope is first to be preferred.*
. . . . . .
———*there the Sun,*
*Great fertilizer! on the fallow mould*
*Strikes powerfully, when at his summer height,*
*With perpendicular ray.*—P. 37.

The fertilizing influence of the sunbeams must be peculiarly powerful on a soil that has never been exposed to it. Now that influence is smaller or greater in proportion as the rays strike the surface at an angle more or less acute; that is, the influence is greater in proportion as the line of the ray approaches to perpendicularity with respect to the surface shone upon. Hence the surface of a declivity to the south, and the lower stratum of the atmosphere covering that declivity, are often in a state of genial warmth, while a declivity to the north, or even a plain, feels the influence of frost. In a winter day, a southward slope, if the

rise be not very gentle, absorbs more of the sun's heat than a plain surface at midsummer. The different effects of the sun, according to the *lying* of the soil, is no where so obvious as on molehills during a hard frost, the sunny side being often completely thawed, while the other is as hard as stone. —It does not follow from this, that a slope to the sun is the best situation for every crop. In such situations, sown grass, red clover especially, or any other delicate plant, will be apt, in the spring months, to be injured by the violence of the transition from the degree of heat which they enjoy during the day to the pinching cold of the night. They will also be apt to come forward prematurely.

## Note II.

*First draw a single furrow up and down,*
*Then turning, &c.*——P. 37.

This compendious mode of laying land dry, and exposing it completely to the influence of the sun and the air, is, with a little variation, the invention of my friend Mr John Mackenzie, merchant in Glasgow, a man whose originality of genius has been much and successfully exercised on agricultural subjects.

## Note III.

*The compost pile examine now and turn.*---P. 43.

Lord Meadowbank's short treatise on manures contains the most simple, the most satisfactory, the most concise, and, at the same time, the most complete exposition of the theory and practice of *manure* that ever I read. His directions as to the management of composts, and particularly of peat composts, ought to be read and studied by every farmer. They are too long for insertion here; but I conceive that, by quoting some of the general facts, or rather remarks, with which his Lordship prefaces his directions on the subject of peat moss, I shall confer a favour on the reader, as the pamphlet itself is not to be had in the shops.

1. " All recently dead animal or vegetable matter, if sufficiently divided, moist, and not chilled nearly to freezing, tends spontaneously to undergo changes, that bring it at length to be a fat greasy earth, which, when mixed with sands, clays, and a little chalk or pounded limestone, forms what is called rich loam, or garden mould.

2. " In vegetable matter, when amassed in quantities, these changes are at first attended with very considerable heat, (sometimes proceeding the length of inflammation,) which, when not exceeding blood-heat, greatly favours and quickens the changes, both in animal matter, and the fur-

ther changes in vegetable matter, that are not sensibly attended with the production of heat. The changes attended with heat, are said to happen by a fermentation, named, from what is observed in making of ale, wine, or vinegar. The latter are ascribed to what is called *putrefactive fermentation.*

3. " Besides moderate moisture and heat, and that division of parts which admits the air in a certain degree, circumstances which seem to be necessary to the production of these changes, stirring, or mechanical mixture, favours them ; and a similar effect arises from the addition of chalk, pounded limestone, lime, rubbish of old buildings, or burnt lime brought back to its natural state; and also of ashes of burnt coal, peat, or wood, soap-leys, soot, sea-shells, and sea-ware. And, on pressure or consolidation, excluding air; by much water, especially when below the heat of a pool in summer; by astringents, and by caustic substances, as quicklime, acids, and pure alkalies, at least till their causticity is mollified, at the expence of the destruction of part of the animal and vegetable matter to which they are added.

4. " These changes are accomplished by the separation or decomposition of the parts or ingredients of which the dead vegetables and animals are composed; by the escape of somewhat of their substance in the form of vapours or gasses ; by the imbibing also of somewhat from water and from the atmosphere ; and by the formation of compound matters, from the reunion of parts or ingredients, which had been separated by the powers of the living vegetables and

animals. The earlier changes, and in general those which take place previous to the destruction of the adhesion and texture of the dead vegetables and animals, appear to be rather pernicious than favourable to the growth of living vegetables, exposed to the direct effect of them; whereas the changes subsequent to the destruction of the animal and vegetable texture, promote powerfully the growth of plants, and, partly by their immediate efficacy on the plants exposed to their influence, partly by the alterations they produce in the soil, constitute what is to be considered as enriching manure.

5. "It should be the object of the farmer to give his soil the full benefit of these latter changes, decompositions, and recompositions, which proceed slowly, and continue to go on for years after the manure is lodged in the soil. Even loam or garden mould is still undergoing some remaining changes of the same sort; and, by frequently stirring it, or removing it, and using it as a top-dressing, its spontaneous changes are so favoured, that it will yield heavy crops for a time without fresh manure; or, in other words, it is rendered in so far a manure itself, as it decomposes faster than its ordinary and more stationary state, and, in so doing, nourishes vegetables more abundantly, or forms new combinations in the adjoining soil, that enable it to do so." "It should also be the object of the farmer, to employ the more early changes, not only to bring forward the substances undergoing them into a proper state to be committed to the soil, but to accelerate or retard them, so as to have his manure ready for use at the proper seasons, with as little loss as possible,

from part being too much and part too little decomposed; and also to avail himself of the activity of those changes, to restore to a state of sufficiently rapid spontaneous decomposition, such substances in his farm, as, though in a state of decay, had become so stationary as to be unfit for manure, without the aid of heat and mixture.

" By attention to the two first particulars, and the proper use of compression, stirring and mixture, the farm dunghill, though formed slowly, and of materials in very various states of decay, is brought forward in nearly the same condition. By attention to the latter, manure may, in most situations in Scotland, be tripled or quadrupled; *et finum est aurum.* On the other hand, by inattention to them, part of the manure is put into the soil unprepared, that is, in a situation where the texture of the vegetable is still entire; and, its decomposition never having been carried far by the heat and mixture of a fermenting mass, proceeds in the soil so slowly, that, like ploughed-down stubble, it does not merit the name of manure. Part, again, is apt to be too much rotted; that is, much of it is too nearly approaching to the state of garden mould, whereby much benefit is lost, by the escape of what had been separated during the process it has undergone, and the good effects in the soil of what remains are less durable; for, between solution in water, and rapid decomposition, from its advanced state of rottenness, it is soon reduced to that of garden mould; and, in fine, the powers of fermenting vegetable with animal matter, which, when properly employed, are certainly most efficacious in converting into manure many substances that are other-

wise very stationary, and slow in their decomposition, are lost to the farmer; so that he is often reduced to adopt an imperfect and little profitable mode of cultivation, from the want of the manure requisite for a better, though such manure may be lying in abundance within his reach, but useless, from his ignorance how to prepare it."

## Note IV.

*————And toss around the heaps,*
*O'er all the surface equally dispread.*—P. 43.

To separate manure into minute parts, and mix it equally, is as necessary to its complete and wholesome effect, as the mastication of food is to the process of digestion.

## Note V.

*The larger harrow, called by some the brake.*—P. 44.

" The necessity of some instrument, more effectual than the common harrow, for reducing a stubborn soil, has led farmers to put three or four harrows, one above another, in order to press the undermost into the ground. This substitute to the brake is far inferior in its effect; beside that the undermost harrow is torn to pieces in an instant. To conclude this article, a farmer, who has no brake, wants a capi-

tal instrument of husbandry. Its price above that of common harrows, bears no proportion to the profit."

Lord KAMES's *Gentleman Farmer.*

## Note VI.

*Nor is there found a crop that yields increase*
*More sure, abundant, and at smaller charge,*
*Than does the willow grove.*—P. 45.

"It is now a proper time to plant osiers and other sorts of willows. No part of the farmer's business pays better than such plantations, and especially if he has any low, spongy, boggy bottoms near a stream. The land should be formed by spadework into beds, six, eight, or ten feet broad, by narrow ditches; and if there is a power of keeping water in these cuts at pleasure by a sluice, it is in some seasons very advantageous to do so."—YOUNG's *Farmer's Calendar*, February.

# NOTES ON MARCH.

## Note I.

*The broad-leaved plants whose product is their root,*
*They least exhaust; and next the legume tribes, &c.*—P. 57.

The following remarks by Lord Kames on the effects of different crops, contain a very distinct and philosophical exposition of the principles on which the practice of rotation of crops depends.

" Culmiferous plants, having small leaves and few in number, depend mostly on the soil for nourishment, and little on the air. During the ripening of the seed, they draw probably their whole nourishment from the soil; as the leaves by this time, being dry and withered, must have lost their power of drawing nourishment from the air. Now, as culmiferous plants are chiefly cultivated for their seed, and are not cut down till the seed be fully ripe, they may be pronounced all of them to be robbers, some more some less. But such plants, while young, are all leaves; and in that state draw most of their nourishment from the air. Hence

it is, that where cut green for food to cattle, a culmiferous crop is far from being a robber. A hay crop accordingly, even where it consists mostly of rye-grass, is not a robber, provided it be cut before the seed is formed ; which at any rate it ought to be, if one would have hay in perfection. And the foggage, excluding frost by covering the ground, keeps the roots warm. A leguminous plant, by its broad leaves, draws much of its nourishment from the air. A cabbage, which has very broad leaves, and a multitude of them, owes its growth more to the air than to the soil. One fact is certain, that a cabbage cut and hung up in a damp place, preserves its verdure longer than other plants. At the same time, a seed is that part of a plant which requires the most nourishment; and for that nourishment a culmiferous plant must be indebted entirely to the soil. A leguminous crop, on the contrary, when cut green for food, must be very gentle to the ground. Pease and beans are leguminous plants ; but being cultivated for seed, they seem to occupy a middle station : their seed makes them more severe than other leguminous crops cut green: their leaves, which grow till reaping, make them less severe, than a culmiferous plant left to ripen.

" These plants are distinguished no less remarkably by the following circumstance :—All the seeds of a culmiferous plant ripen at the same time. As soon as they begin to form, the plant becomes stationary, the leaves wither, the roots cease to push, and the plant, when cut down, is blanched and sapless. The seeds of a leguminous plant are formed successively : flowers and fruit appear at the same time

in different parts of the plant. This plant accordingly is continually growing, and pushing its roots. Hence the value of bean or pease straw above that of wheat or oats: the latter is withered and dry when the crop is cut; the former, green and succulent. The difference, therefore, with respect to the soil, between a culmiferous and leguminous crop, is great. The latter growing till cut down, keeps the ground in constant motion, and leaves it to the plough loose and mellow. The former gives over growing long before reaping, and the ground, by want of motion, turns compact and hard. Nor is this all. Dew falling on a culmiferous crop, after the ground begins to harden, rests on the surface, and is sucked up by the next sun. Dew that falls on a leguminous crop is shaded from the sun by the broad leaves, and sinks at leisure into the ground. The ground accordingly, after a culmiferous crop, is not only hard but dry; after a leguminous crop, it is not only loose, but soft and unctuous."

* * * *

"Bulbous-rooted plants are, above all, successful in dividing and pulverizing the soil. Potatoe-roots grow six, eight, or ten inches under the surface; and, by their size and number, they divide and pulverise the soil better than can be done by the plough; consequently, whatever be the natural colour of the soil, it is black when a potatoe crop is taken up. The potatoe, however, with respect to its quality of dividing the soil, must yield to a carrot or parsnip; which are large roots, and pierce often to the depth of eighteen inches. The turnip, by its tap-root, divides the soil

more than can be done by a fibrous-rooted plant; but as its bulbous root grows mostly above ground, it divides the soil less than the potatoe, the carrot, or the parsnip. Red clover, in that respect, may be put in the same class with turnip."

## Note II.

———*Then pare the turf,*
*And lay it loosely up, in hollow heaps,*
*Triangular; next kindle each, till far*
*The smoky clouds, &c.*——P. 61.

"The practice of burning the surface, and applying the ashes as manure to the soil that remains, has been long prevalent in Britain; and though it has been condemned, nay reprobated, by many chemical writers, and prohibited in numerous instances by proprietors, yet, by professional people, who judged upon the utility of the practice, according to the nature and consequences of the after-effects, it has, almost in every case, been supported, and considered as the most advantageous way of bringing in and improving all soils, where the surface carried a coarse sward, and was composed of peat-earth, or other inactive substances. The burning of this surface has been viewed as the best way of bringing such soils into action; the ashes, furnished by the burning, serving as a stimulant to raise up their dormant powers, thereby rendering them fertile and productive in a

superior degree, than otherwise could possibly be accomplished.

"These have been the sentiments of husbandmen for many generations, and are not to be overturned by the force of abstract reasoning, however plausibly and forcibly urged. Were a field to be burned, and the ashes thereby produced to be removed to another, the objections of chemists would be well founded; but so long as these ashes are spread upon the surface, and an effect produced upon the remainder of the soil and subsoil, equal, if not superior to that occasioned by calcareous manure, no evil is to be dreaded. The soil, in place of being thinned by the burning, is, in fact, thickened; because a portion of the subsoil is impregnated and brought into action, whereby the staple is deepened, and its productive powers increased. It must be remarked, however, that as the effects of burnt ashes, though instantaneous, are not of long duration, a dressing of dung, in the third year, becomes highly necessary; after which, land so treated should be restored to grass. The great object to be attended to, when stimulants are employed, is to use gentle and lenient cropping afterwards; otherwise, what with justice might have been considered as a meritorious improvement, may turn out to deserve a contrary character."—Mr Brown of Markle, Editor of the Farmer's Magazine. *Vid.* Edinb. Encycl. art. *Agriculture*, sect. vi.

## Note III.

*And what more fitting form at once to hold*
*The kindled fuel, and apply the heat,*
*Than one well known,---the rolling cylinder.*—P. 63.

I am convinced that the benefit derived from paring and burning, or from the combustion of substances, such as straw, brought and laid upon the surface, does not consist merely in the conversion of the substances so burnt into manures, but consists partly in the heat imparted to the soil. Where the operation of paring and burning cannot be performed, as in lands already under tillage, a very great degree of heat may be applied in the manner which I have attempted to point out. An iron cylinder of two feet and a half diameter would hold a cart of coals. It might be so divided into compartments, that the coals would not be broken down by shifting round. A number of holes in the sides (not in the circumference) would be sufficient for supplying the fire with air; and these holes might be so contrived, that any number of them might be shut or opened, so as to diminish or increase the violence of the combustion. A high degree of heat would not answer, as the iron, if *red* hot, would bend. The iron would need to be kept at that degree of heat which is between blue and red, but more on the blue. Cast iron, on coming in contact with water, would be apt to crack, and hammered iron would be expensive.

I should think that a cast-iron cylinder, sheathed in hammered iron, would do. This may be a visionary project, and may perhaps subject me to ridicule. I state it with no degree of confidence; I merely throw it out as perhaps not unworthy of trial by those who have opportunities, and who can afford the expence of a full and fair experiment. To such as are disposed to treat with ridicule him who ventures to suggest what he conjectures may possibly be of use, I would observe, that such treatment, though in a great proportion of cases, as probably in this, it may be fitly enough applied, cannot tend to the advancement of science, which, it is well known, has sometimes derived improvement from the accidental discoveries and observations of persons equally ignorant on chemical subjects, as I, with regret, confess myself to be.

## Note IV.

*And downy flowers on river-loving palms.*——P. 65.

Our excellent Scottish lexicographer, Dr Jamieson, though he generally unites accuracy with ingenuity in his explanatory and etymylogical disquisitions, has fallen into a mistake with respect to the meaning of the word *palm*. Under the article *saugh* (willow) he notices the word *palms*, as signifying the *flowers* of the willow. Now the word, as used in Scotland, signifies the *tree itself*. This use of the word is certainly an instance of perversion of terms; and I account

for it in this way :—The willow is one of the trees whose leaves and flowers appear very early in the spring. In times of popery, when the different parts of our Saviour's history were made the subject of processions and shows, the circumstances attending his final entry into Jerusalem were not forgotten; and, among other circumstances, that of the people going out to meet him with branches of palm trees, (*John*, ch. xiii. ver. 13.) made part of the ceremony observed on the sixth Sunday after Easter, called *Palm-Sunday;* but as palm-trees are not to be had in our northern regions, the tree earliest in leaf and flower was chosen as a substitute. The earliest species of the willow was naturally chosen, and hence it got the name of the palm-tree. In some parts of Scotland, *Palm-Sunday* has been converted into *Palm-Saturday*, when the boys still make processions with branches of palm-trees.

## Note V.

*Therefore by day their gateway-porch enlarge,*
*But still at eve let it be closed secure.*—P. 66.

"In spring I generally shut up the doors of my hives every evening, as soon as the bees are all got in, and open them again next morning; and I even do this for whole days during that season, when the cold is severe; as cold wind blowing in at their entries are extremely prejudicial to them, and ought therefore to be prevented with all pos-

sible care. By this simple practice, the bees are kept warm and healthy, which is greatly beneficial to them in breeding. But in following this plan, great caution must be observed, that the bees have no other vent to get out at, as the consequences would be fatal"

* * * * * * *

"In spring, as the bees gradually increase in numbers, their entry should be gradually widened, lest they be impeded in their labours; but this should only be done in proportion to the number of bees in a hive. During March and April, they should be very little, as warmness is health to bees, and furthers their hatching greatly."

* * * * * * *

"The method of enlarging or straitening the entries of hives is quite simple. Pieces of wood, all of one size outwardly, but with holes cut in the under part of them, of the various dimensions above described, might be made and kept ready at all times, to be exchanged with each other, according as the season requires, or the bee-master wishes to widen or to straiten his hives; but indeed a little plaster lime will straiten or widen an entry in spring and summer, with very little trouble."—BONNER *on Bees.*

To those who cultivate bees, whether for amusement or profit, I would recommend this book, as containing, amid some strange but amiable enthusiasm, a great portion of accurate observation and just remark.

## Note VI.

———*And when the welkin's warm,*
*Nor sudden frost, nor rain will harm your fields.*—P. 67.

The warmth of the lower region of the air is sometimes very deceitful. Often when a westerly wind blows below, in the higher regions a contrary current prevails. It is a common saying among country people, that when the frost *taks the lift* there will be bad weather. The *lift* signifies the firmament, or higher parts of the atmosphere. Whenever those parts are in a cold state, whether from the wind blowing from a cold quarter, or from any other cause, the flight of the lark is, comparatively speaking, low; and even ist notes are less full and melodious.

# NOTES ON APRIL.

## Note I.

*Soon as the earliest swallow skims the mead,*
*The barley sowing is by some begun.*—P. 73.

" Magna fides avium est; experiamur aves."
Ov. Fast. lib. iv. 814.

In choosing the proper times for performing the different operations of husbandry, the farmer's plans ought not to be regulated by the present appearances of the weather; neither ought they to be regulated by the progress of vegetation in wild plants or trees; for they in general afford no more than evidence of what, on the whole, the state of the season *has hitherto been.* On the other hand, the birds of passage undoubtedly possess an instinctive forecast of what *is to be* the state of the weather.

The connection, indeed, between the appearance of certain birds, and the future state of the weather, is so striking, that the ancients seem to have derived from these natural

prognostications, the whole system on which their auspices pretended to foretel even such events, as could have had no dependance on the appearances of Nature. The superior foresight (so to speak) of birds is easily accounted for. A swallow, for instance, is probably able to traverse Europe in four-and-twenty hours, consequently its determinations to begin or to continue its migrations may easily be the result of observations on the state of the atmosphere, made not in this or that particular district, but in a compass of several hundreds of miles. The appearance, then, of birds of passage, may be considered as affording a surer prognostic of the future state of the weather than the state of vegetation in plants and trees possibly can; inasmuch as the range of observation and feeling of birds is extensive, their perceptions exceedingly acute, and their very existence dependent upon the state of the season in those countries to which, at particular times, they resort.

## Note II.

*Should in saline infusion drench the seed.*—P. 73.

The practice of steeping seed in different kinds of pickle is as old as the days of Virgil,

> " Semina vide equidem multos medicare serentes,
> Et nitro prius et nigra perfundere amurca."
>
> *Geor.* I. l. 193.

Though indeed, from the line that immediately follows these

two, it would seem that Virgil had no great faith in such preparations,

" Grandior ut fœtus siliquis *fallacibus* esset."

Modern experience, however, has proved, beyond a doubt, that the steeping of seed in water strongly impregnated with salt, is often of very great advantage.

" The last spring (1783) being remarkably dry, I soaked my seed-barley in the black water taken from a reservoir, which constantly receives the draining of my dungheap and stables. As the light corn floated on the top, I skimmed it off, and let the rest stand 24 hours. On taking it from the water, I mixed the seed-grain with a sufficient quantity of sifted wood-ashes, to make it spread regularly, and sowed three fields with it. I began sowing the 16th, and finished the 23d of April. The produce was 60 bushels per acre of good clean barley, without any *small* or *green* corn, or weeds at harvest. No person in this country had better grain."

" I sowed also several other fields with the same seed dry, and without any preparation; but the crop, like those of my neighbours, was very poor; not more than 20 bushels per acre, and much mixed with *green* corn and weeds when harvested. I also sowed some of the seed dry on one ridge in each of my former fields, but the produce was very poor in comparison of the other parts of the field."—A Correspondent of the Bath Society, *vid.* Forsyth, vol. i. p. 502.

## Note III.

*And then, with cautious hand, the hedges lop,*
*Broad at the bottom, tapering by degrees.*—P. 74.

The following observations by Lord Kames, on the proper method of rearing hawthorn-hedges, though very important, are not sufficiently attended to :

" We are now arrived at the most important article of all, that of training up a thorn-hedge after it is planted. The ordinary method is, to cut off the top and shorten the lateral branches, in order to make it thick and bushy. To the same end, the young thorns, after standing six or seven years, are sometimes cut over within two or three inches of the ground, which multiplies the stems and makes the hedge still thicker. This form of a hedge catches the eye: by its thickness it is formidable to cattle, but its weakness is discovered when bare of leaves, and cattle break through every where without obstruction.

" I have the experience of three hedges trained for twelve years, as follows :---The first has been annually pruned, top and sides. The sides of the second have been pruned, but the top left entire. The third was allowed to grow without any pruning. The first is at present about four feet broad, and thick from top to bottom ; but weak in its stems, and unable to resist any horned beast. The second is strong in

its stems, and close from top to bottom. The third is also strong in its stems, but, for two feet up, bare of lateral branches, which have been destroyed by the overshadowing of those above, depriving them both of rain and air. That the second is the best method is ascertained by experience; and that it ought to be so, will be evident, if we can trust to analogy. In the natural growth of a tree, its trunk is proportioned to its height: lop off the head, it spreads laterally, and becomes strong, without rising in height or swelling in the trunk."

Another able writer observes, that "The great art of preserving hedges fencible, after they are raised, consists in keeping them three or four times broader at the bottom than at the top. By this means every part has the full advantage of the sun, air, and rain; it grows equally thick throughout, and particularly below, where it is most necessary. But when a hedge is trained broader at top, or even perpendicular, that half of it next the surface is under the drip of the rest; and, deprived of sun and rain, it sickens; produces few or no young shoots; the sap runs all to the top of the hedge; it gets quite bare below; and soon becomes unfit for a fence. Every accurate observer will allow that this is the case, more or less, in the greater part of what are generally considered as the best kept hedges, such as those surrounding market-gardens in the neighbourhood of towns, which, though they are annually cleaned and shorn with great care, are commonly so naked below, as to admit hares, dogs, swine, &c."---Loudon's *Observations*, edit. 1804, p. 143.

## Note IV.

*Some husbandmen, as if by rage impelled,*
*With unrelenting hatchets, level low*
*Each full-grown hedge.*——P. 74.

The mania of massacring hedges, not old decayed hedges, but such as are still in their prime, is quite unaccountable. Even when hedges are old, the practice of hewing them down within a foot or less of the ground is quite absurd. The stumps thus left, it will be observed, never grow a bit higher; so that they do not present any thing like an *interim* fence; and the twigs that shoot from them, unless defended with all the care that a young hedge requires, are liable to be destroyed by cattle passing over and through them. Cutting over at the distance of three feet from the ground, answers the purpose of obtaining a crop of new shoots equally well, while the old stems, with the aid of a stake put in here and there, continue to be a useful fence. Besides, cutting a thorn very near the root often destroys, and always greatly impairs, the vegetative powers of the stump.

The practice of plashing, though it does not deprive the field of an interim fence, is condemned by Lord Kames in these words: "Plashing an old hedge, an ordinary practice in England, makes indeed a good interim fence; but at the long run is destructive to the hedge: and accordingly, there

is scarcely to be met with a complete good hedge, where plashing has been long practised. A cat is said, among the vulgar, to have nine lives; is it their opinion, that a thorn, like a cat, may be cut and slashed at will, without suffering by it?"

## Note V.

*The genius of the thorn is misconceived, &c.*—P. 76.

Hawthorns, and all the thorny tribes which, in a state of nature, run into thickets, thrive the better for being crowded. In a crowded state, that is in the state of a thicket, they will not indeed assume the appearance of trees, as single hawthorns do, but they will possess health and vigour as shrubs. They will not shoot into tall sickly poles, as trees properly so called do, when they are crowded together. It is, therefore, quite absurd to plant thorns like turnips or potatoes, in drills, by way of making them healthy. It is, no doubt, easier to weed a hedge, consisting of a single regular row of plants, than one consisting of thorns three or four deep. But, in truth, there would be no difficulty in weeding young thorns, though they formed even a broad belt. They should never be weeded with any other instrument than the hand; for the bark (a most essential part in the structure of a plant) is always more or less wounded by the use of iron weeders. After being weeded by the hand for a year or two, they require no aid to enable them to

keep their ground against the growth of weeds. But weeding at all would be quite unnecessary, if the plan which I suggest were to be adopted. Protection for two or three years against the assaults of cattle, would be quite sufficient to ensure the growth of an impenetrable fence. The surface of the little mounds on which our single-row hedges are reared, is seldom less than five or six feet. I do not mean that such mounds are generally five or six feet in breadth, but merely that, measuring from the ditch up the slope over, and down to the ground on the other side, there is generally a *surface* of the extent at least which I have mentioned. Now, though in estimating the space which, in such cases, may be filled with plants that grow, like the hawthorn, upright, the base of the mound must be the rule, yet when the plantable space (so to speak) is estimated, partly in reference to shrubs that creep or climb, the superficial extent of the mound is so far the rule for estimating the number of plants which the space will hold, I do then, with some confidence, say, that on such a space of five or six feet, by mixing several kinds of the thorny shrubs together, adding perhaps some willows and honeysuckles, fences of the most sufficient and durable, as well as beautiful kind, might be reared without any other trouble than that of keeping them from encroaching beyond their prescribed limits. Brambles and briers, though they are short-lived plants, are every year pushing out fresh shoots; and in this way are excellently fitted for filling up the lower parts of fences, where the under branches of the more permanent thorns have decayed. They are useful in another respect;

for though they are weaker than either the white or black thorn, yet, from the hooked shape of their prickles, they form a more formidable obstacle to sheep. Nor can the injury which they might do to the wool be objected to, since it is only imperfect fences, that is, such as the sheep know by experience they can force a way through, that they ever attempt to break. The social nature of the hawthorn is proved by another circumstance, besides its thriving best in thickets,—namely, that even the close embrace of ivy does it no injury. The finest hawthorn-trees that I have seen were encircled with that beautiful evergreen. I do not think that it is even much injured by trees overspreading it, for it certainly grows with great luxuriance in woods.

## Note VI.

*There place your foot, let not a twig encroach.*—P. 77.

I, of course, limit this observation to cases where ornament is only a secondary consideration. A certain irregularity and wildness of appearance in a hedge is more pleasing than a uniform trimness. At the same time, I am far from approving of that fastidious attachment to systematic irregularity, that would exclude, from all the productions of Nature, every trace of the human hand.

## Note VII.

———————*With Highland flings*
*Not void of grace.*—P. 79.

The superiority of Highland dancing, as existing in the Highlands, is admirably described by Mrs Grant:

" Then *native* Music wakes in sprightly strains,
Which gay according motion best explains:
Fastidious Elegance, in scornful guise,
Perhaps th' unpolished measure may despise;
But here, where infants lisp in tuneful lays,
And Melody her untaught charms displays;
The dancers bound with wild peculiar grace,
And sound through all its raptured mazes trace;
Nor awkward step, nor rude ungainly mien,
Through all the glad assemblage can be seen:
But with decorous air, and sprightly ease,
Even critic taste the agile dancers please.
Cameleon Fashion's self, whose varying hue
Assumes the likeness of each object new,
Returns, to copy Motion's artless grace,
Even from the wildest of the mountain race,
And, with decisive voice, her votaries calls,
To ape, with air constrained, the rural balls!
The nymph that wont to trace the source of *Tay*,
Or lead the sprightly dance by rapid *Spey*,

With conscious triumph, smiles aside to see,
This ' faint reflection of the rural glee ;'
Short pleasure languid imitation feels,
While polished courtiers pant in active reels."

*The Highlanders,* p. 55. 1st edit.

## Note VIII.

*A softened tone, and slower measure, flows*
*Sweet from the strings, and stills the boisterous joy.*—P. 80.

In Ramsay's time, it seems to have been common for fiddlers to accompany the instrument with the voice.

" In sonnet slee the man I sing,
His rare eng'yne in rhyme shall ring,
Wha slaid the stick out o'er the string
Wi' sic an art;
Wha sang sae sweetly to the spring,
An' rais'd the heart."

*Elegy on Patie Birnie.*

# NOTES ON MAY.

## Note I.

*Even love itself, that in the peasant's heart*
*Was wont to glow with pure and constant flame, &c.*—P. 91.

" In appreciating the happiness and virtue of a community, there is perhaps no single criterion on which so much dependence may be placed, as the state of the intercourse betwixt the sexes. Where this displays ardour of attachment, accompanied by purity of conduct, the character and the influence of women rise in society, our imperfect nature mounts in the scale of moral excellence; and, from the source of this single affection, a stream of felicity descends, which branches into a thousand rivulets, that enrich and adorn the field of life. Where the attachment between the sexes sinks into an appetite, the heritage of our species is comparatively poor, and man approaches the condition of *the brutes that perish.*"

*Remarks on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry*, by Dr Currie.

The ardour of attachment and purity of conduct here spoken of, are in part ascribed by Dr Currie to the influence of the national music and poetry.

" Their present influence on the character of the nation is, however, great and striking. To them we must attribute, in a great measure, the romantic passion which so often characterises the attachments of the humblest of the people of Scotland, to a degree that, if we mistake not, is seldom found in the same rank of society in other countries. The pictures of love and happiness exhibited in their rural songs, are early impressed on the mind of the peasant, and are rendered more attractive from the music with which they are united. They associate themselves with his own youthful emotions; they elevate the object as well as the nature of his attachment; and give to the impressions of sense, the beautiful colours of imagination. Hence, in the course of his passion, a Scottish peasant often exerts a spirit of adventure, of which a Spanish cavalier need not be ashamed. After the labours of the day are over, he sets out for the habitation of his mistress, perhaps at many miles distance, regardless of the length or dreariness of the way. He approaches her in secrecy, under the disguise of night. A signal at the door or window, perhaps agreed on, and understood by none but her, gives information of his arrival; and sometimes it is repeated again and again, before the capricious fair one will obey the summons. But if she favours his addresses, she escapes unobserved, and receives the vows of her lover under the gloom of twilight, or the deeper shade

of night. Interviews of this kind are the subjects of many of the Scottish songs, some of the most beautiful of which Burns has imitated or improved."—*Remarks, &c.* by Dr CURRIE.

## Note II.

*In moorland farms, the season now invites*
*Him, who would change the heath-flower for the pea,*
*To draw his drains both deep and broad, with sides*
*Of easy slope.*———P. 92.

The mode of converting peat-moss into fertile fields, as practised by Mr Smith of Swinridge-moor, who led the way in this species of improvement, or at least first communicated it to the public, is described by Mr Headrick, in a communication to the Board of Agriculture. The following are extracts from that communication:

"When they enter upon the improvement of a moss in its natural state, the first thing to be done is, to mark and cut main or master drains, eight feet in width, by four and a half in depth, and declining to two and a half at bottom; these cost a shilling per fall of Scots ells. In some instances, it will be found necessary to cut those drains much deeper, consequently at a greater expence. These drains, almost in every instance, can be, and are so conducted, as to divide the field into regular and proper inclosures. They

always make it a rule to finish off as much of a drain as they have broken up, before they leave it at night; because if a part is left dug, suppose half-way, the oozing of water from the sides would render the bottom so soft, that they could neither stand upon it, nor lift it with the spade. When the moss is so very soft, that the pressure of what is thrown out of the drain may cause its sides to fall in again, they throw the clods from the drain a considerable way back, and sometimes have a man to throw them still further back, by a spade or the hand; for this reason, too, they always throw the stuff taken from a drain as equally as possible on each side of it. In digging the drains, the workmen stand upon small boards, to prevent them from sinking, and move them forward as the work advances.

"When the moss lies in a hollow, with only one outlet, it is necessary to lead up a drain, so as to let the water pass this outlet, and then conduct it along the lowest or wettest part of the moss: this middle drain is afterwards sloped, and the stuff thrown back into the hollows that may occur; upon it the ridges are made to terminate on each side, while a ring-drain, serving the purpose of a fence, is thrown round the moss, at the line where the rising ground commences. This can generally be so managed as to divide the moss into a square field, leaving straight lines for the sides of the contiguous fields. The ring-drain intercepts the surface water from the higher grounds, and conducts it into the lower part of the outlet, while the sloped drain in the centre receives and discharges all the water that falls upon the moss."

* * * * * * *

"The drains being thus completed, they mark out the ridges, either with a long string, or with three poles set in a line. Mr Smith has tried several breadths of ridges, but now gives a decided preference to those that are seven yards in breadth. The ridges are formed with the spade in the following manner: In the centre of each intended ridge, a space of about two feet is allowed to remain untouched; on each side of that space a furrow is opened, which is turned over so as completely to cover that space, like what is called *veering* or *feering* of a gathered ridge; the work, thus begun, is continued by cutting furrows with the spade, and turning them over from end to end of the ridge on each side, until they arrive at the division-furrows. The breadth of the slices thus cut may be about 12 inches, and each piece is made as long as it may suit to turn over. The ridge, when finished, has the appearance of having been done with a plough. The division-furrow is two feet in breadth, which, if necessary to draw off superfluous water, is partly cut and thrown upon the sides, or into hollows in the ridges on each side. The depth of the division-furrows is regulated by circumstances, so as not to lay the ridges at first too dry, but at the same time to bleed, as it were, the moss, and conduct the superfluous water into the master drains.

"The next operation is to top-dress the ridges with lime. The sooner this is done after the ridges are formed, the better. When the moss appears dry, experienced farmers throw on the lime, but do not clean out the division-furrows until the ensuing winter. When it is soaked in water, they clean the division-furrows as soon as the lime is ready, and after

the water has run off, apply the lime immediately. It is of great importance to have the lime applied while the moss is still moist, and the lime in as caustic a state as possible."

## Note III.

———————*But man,*
*When forced his dwelling-place to leave, the fields*
*Which he and his forefathers ploughed.*—P. 94.

Those who consider the soil in no other light than as a commodity which may be manufactured into corn or cattle, *i. e.* into pounds, shillings, and pence, affect to sneer at the very statement of the question, whether the system of large or small farms is preferable. I am well aware, that any legislative interference, either with trade or agriculture, is apt to do more harm than good. At the same time, I can never see the propriety of an undeviating application of the *laissez faire* principle. That principle is only a good one when it is observed throughout. On such a subject as this, however, my judgment will be of little weight. I will, therefore, refer to the opinion of a man who was no visionary. His ideas appear to me to be so just, and to have so obvious a tendency to promote the comfort and happiness of the people, that I think they cannot be too often repeated and insisted on.

" I proceed to an interesting article, which is, to com-

pare great and small farms in point of utility. I call a small farm what employs but a single plough; and a smaller there ought not to be. A middling farm is what requires two ploughs; and whatever requires a greater number, I call a great farm. These different farms I shall consider with respect to the landlord, with respect to the tenant, and with respect to the public.

" With respect to the landlord, there are advantages and disadvantages that tend to balance each other. Small farms draw the greatest number of candidates; which cannot fail to raise the rents. On the other hand, small farms occasion a great expence for houses; and in a country where building materials are costly, large farms may appear to be the interest of the landlord.

" With respect to tenants, a farm as large as can be accurately managed, is undoubtedly the interest of a tenant, provided he have a fund for stocking the farm sufficiently. But this is really saying no more, but that it is beneficial to have a large fund. The proper question is, Whether, with respect to farmers in general, it is not a convenience to have the choice of small or great farms, according to their stock? In that view, small farms are undoubtedly advantageous to those who want to be farmers; because, in Scotland at least, the number is much greater of those who can stock a small farm, than of those who can go farther. It may possibly be objected, that there is an inconvenience in a small farm, where two horses only are necessary for a plough, in respect that two horses make but a slow progress in carrying corn or dung. To this objection there is a ready answer: Two

horses in two single carts will make as much expedition in carrying out the dung, or carrying in the corn of a small farm, as double that number will make in a middling farm, where the dung and corn are double in quantity. I say further, that if two horses be not sufficient, the defect may be readily supplied by two draught oxen, which add very little to the expence of the farm. These, at four years of age, may be purchased for 10 l. They will give, at seven, 15 l.; and this profit, with no more work than sufficient to give them a stomach, will balance their summer food of green clover. Their winter food of straw cannot enter into the computation, being the very best way of converting straw into dung. Here there is a great convenience. Where a field, by drought or otherwise, is rendered too stiff for a pair, the oxen may be yoked in the plough with the horses. In ground less stiff, the farmer has a choice of two oxen and a horse, of two horses alone, or of two oxen. Where ploughing happens to be retarded by bad weather, two ploughs may be employed, which is a signal convenience. Ploughing, also, and harrowing, may go on at the same time; and the farmer has it always in his power to yoke two double carts. Even in carse-soil this plan will answer; as there is seldom occasion to employ the oxen but where the ground is sufficiently dry for them.

"With respect to the public, small farms are undoubtedly the most advantageous. The number of servants, it is true, must be in proportion to the size of the farm; but in a middling farm there is but one tenant; whereas in two small farms of no greater extent, there are two. And the

difference is still greater in large farms. This is a capital circumstance. The children of tenants are taught to read and write; and, in general, are better educated than children of day-labourers, which qualifies them better for being artists and manufacturers. They are also commonly more numerous, being better nourished during non-age, and better preserved from diseases. Small farms accordingly are not only favourable to population, *but to the most useful population.* I would not therefore indulge willingly any farm beyond a middle size. And, to check those of a large size, I am clear for a tax of 3l. or 4l. yearly upon every farm that requires three ploughs; and so on, according to the number. I except proprietors, who ought to be encouraged to improve their estates: let them employ as many ploughs as they find convenient, and not be subjected to any tax. If any undertaker be willing to lay out a large sum of money upon farming, the profit of a long lease will enable him to pay the tax. This tax at the same time may be so contrived, as to answer a valuable purpose, that of exciting farmers to use oxen instead of horses; which will be done by exempting oxen-ploughs from the tax. And the undertaker mentioned will be relieved from the tax altogether, if he employ such ploughs only."

Lord KAMES's *Gentleman Farmer*, p. 276.

# NOTES ON JUNE.

## Note I.

———————*Let us be taught*
*By them ; by Nature lengthening out our day*
*To twice ten hours,—and labour in the cool.*—P. 105.

At Midsummer the sun is above the horizon eighteen hours and a half, and there is good day-light an hour and a quarter before sunrise, and as long after sunset. The day may therefore be said to be 20 hours long at this season. In choosing ten or twelve hours for labour out of these twenty, why, from a habit which suits the cooler seasons of the year, should the very *worst* portion of the day be pitched upon ?

## Note II.

*Why, 'twixt the bean-field's marshalled ranks, is left*
*Free space for air and sun ; and why the spikes*
*Of bearded grain wave equal o'er the plain.*——P. 106.

At one time the drill husbandry was often applied even to grain crops, but now it is going into disuse. Indeed there is an obvious reason for confining this mode of husbandry to those kinds of plants which derive, through the medium of their broad leaves, a very great proportion of their nourishment from the atmosphere, or which bear their product on the lower as well as the upper parts of their stems. The leaves of beans are broad, and both they and the blossoms appear a considerable way down the stalk. The free admission, therefore, of the air and of the sun-beams, for the purposes of growth and ripening, is peculiarly necessary to them. The different species of corn, on the other hand, derive, comparatively speaking, a small portion of their nourishment from the air, and their seed presents itself all at the top of the stalk. It is obvious, therefore, that the broadcast mode of sowing is most suitable to them, and experience has proved this to be the case.

## Note III.

———*Some the hoe prefer,*
*Which female hands, or, if of lighter make,*
*The childish grasp can wield.*—P. 107.

"It is generally supposed that a weightier crop is produced by the drill than by the broad-cast method; but, even admitting them equal in this respect, the superiority as a fallow-crop must be allowed, because, by the repeated horse-hoeings or ploughings in the intervals, and hand-hoeing in the rows, you have it in your power to extirpate the whole race of animal weeds, and so much surface being exposed through the winter, makes a higher preparation for any succeeding crop. Another advantage is, the facility with which they are hoed; as a girl or boy of nine years old can hoe them with the greatest ease, and indeed generally better, than experienced *broad-cast* hoers: because these are more apt to take too many away, and leave them over-thin in the rows, while the young ones, from the apprehension of hoeing them too thin, will leave the plants at any distance you fix upon."—YOUNG's *Farmer's Calendar*, p. 331.

The use of the plough as well as of the hoe, in drill-husbandry, is as old as the days of Virgil. They seem, however, to have been employed chiefly in the cultivation of the vine:

" Seminibus positis, superest deducere terram
Sæpius ad capita, et duros jactare bidentes;
Aut presso exercere solum sub vomere, et ipsa
Flectere luctantes inter vineta juvencos:
*Geor.* II. l. 354.

" Be mindful when thou hast entombed the shoot,
With store of earth around to feed the root;
With iron-teeth of rakes and prongs, to move
The crusted earth, and loosen it above.
Then exercise thy sturdy steers, to plough
Betwixt thy vines."——DRYDEN.

## Note IV.

*If o'er your leas the yellow ragwort spread*
*A gaudy forest.*——P. 108.

In many parts of Scotland, the pasture-fields are covered with large, and consequently exhausting, crops of these weeds, which are allowed to blossom, ripen, and disperse their down-winged seed. I believe they are triennial plants, so that cutting them down for three years will extirpate them. It is hardly necessary to say, that cutting them down in time would serve the double purpose of freeing the ground from a nuisance, and of making a valuable addition to the dunghill.

## Note V.

*Others again, whate'er the grassy crop,*
*If one day's sun they gain, no longer trust*
*The fickle sky, but rear the verdant cock,*
*Of size diminutive, &c.*——P. 118.

On the subject of haymaking, the following mode described by Dr James Anderson appears from the nature of the thing to be so judicious, and its advantages are pointed out in the course of the description, in a manner so simple and convincing, that it ought to be universally known.

" Instead (says he) of allowing the hay to lie, as usual in most places, for some days in the swathe, after it is cut, and afterwards alternately putting it up into cocks, and spreading it out, and tedding it in the sun, which tends greatly to bleach the hay, exhales its natural juices, and subjects it very much to the danger of getting rain, and thus runs a great risk of being good for little; I make it a general rule, if possible, never to cut hay but when the grass is quite dry; and then make the gatherers follow close upon the cutters, putting it up immediately into small cocks, about three feet high each when new put up, and of as small a diameter as they can be made to stand with; always giving each of them a slight kind of thatching, by drawing a few handfuls

of the hay from the bottom of the cock all around, and laying it lightly upon the top with one of the ends hanging downwards. This is done with the utmost ease and expedition; and when it is once in that state, I consider my hay as in a great measure out of danger: for unless a violent wind should arise immediately after the cocks are put up, so as to overturn them, nothing else can hurt the hay; as I have often experienced that no rain, however violent, ever penetrates into these cocks but for a very little way: and, if they are dry put up, they never sit together so closely as to heat; although they acquire, in a day or two, such a degree of firmness, as to be in no danger of being overturned by wind after that time, unless it blows a hurricane."

"In these cocks I allow the hay to remain, until, upon inspection, I judge that it will keep in pretty large tramp-cocks (which is usually in one or two weeks, according as the weather is more or less favourable), when two men, each with a long-pronged pitch-fork, lift up one of these small cocks between them with the greatest ease, and carry them one after another to the place where the tramp-cock is to be built: and in this manner they proceed over the field till the whole is finished."

*Essays on Agriculture*, Vol. i. p. 186.

## Note VI.

*Beneath whose boughs the royal tent was stretched.*—P. 122.

"The king of Scots appointed a general rendezvous of his forces at the Torwood, between Falkirk and Stirling."

HAILES.

## Note VII.

*He passes by the memorable stone.*—P. 123.

The stone in which Bruce fixed his standard is still to be seen.

# NOTES ON JULY.

## Note I.

*Though rarely prized by husbandmen, whose bounds*
*Embrace a widely-spread domain.*—P. 130.

" Farmers of every rank will find their advantage in keeping bee-hives, in proportion to the extent of the flowers that grow upon their farms ; as one single acre planted with turnips, mustard, clover, or heath, will feed many hives. Even the meanest cottager, who has but a cottage and a kail-yard, might keep two or three hives, and sow a little mustard and turnips, or plant a few gooseberry bushes, on purpose to feed bees. There is scarce a country village in the kingdom, that might not afford to keep as many bee-hives as there are dwelling-houses in it ; nor a tradesman in such a village, who might not easily keep as many hives as he has hands employed in business. Even servants might have a few hives kept as their own property, in the gardens of their parents, brothers, or friends. In short, persons of all ranks and degrees, from the king to the cottager, might be

profitably employed, or agreeably amused, by keeping bee-hives."

" I am quite certain, and some others have often told me, that they were of the same opinion, that the melodious humming of bees, when busy at work, or sporting in the air for their own amusement, will have such an effect upon the animal spirits, that, however chagrined or ruffled the temper of a person might be, before he takes a walk among his bees, he generally does not withdraw till the mind enjoys a perfect calm and inward tranquillity."

BONNAR *on Bees.*

## Note II.

———————*The jangling pan*
*Essayed in vain to stop the living cloud.*—P. 133.

This practice is very ancient:

" Tinnitusque cie, et matris quate cymbala circum."
*Georg.* IV. l. 63.

## Note III.

*A tempting seat, a blossoming abode.*——P. 133.

" Obviaque hospitiis teneat frondentibus arbos."
*Georg.* IV. l. 24.

## Note IV.

*But none of all the flowery race affords*
*Supplies so plentiful of honey lymph.*—P. 135.

"Whenever a honey dew is found, the bees are so extremely eager to fetch it, that they quit all other work, that their returns may be the quicker and more numerous; and lest a gloomy change should deprive them of the precious prize. No harvest swain, dreading impending storms, can be more anxious or expeditious, in hastening the housing of his crops, than these aerial tribes in this their delightful office; so much so, that thronging in too great numbers at the door, they jostle and tumble each other down. And smarting woe to those who shall thoughtlessly stand in their way at this important crisis! Their joy on these occasions is expressed in such incessant and loud notes, as to be heard at a great distance. By these tokens it may be known, that there is a honey dew, without seeing the trees from which they gather it."——KEY.

## Note V.

———————*The light precursors fly,*
*Like warping midges on a summer's eve,*
*In reeling dance, &c.*—P. 136.

" If the bees, about eleven o'clock A. M. fly about in a reeling manner, making a noise and motion about the front of the hive, all these are signs to put the bee-master on his guard, and to prepare him for the joyful event that is fast approaching, of a young colony within a day or two, or even, perhaps, within an hour or two. But if the bees, after all this, run hastily up and down the outside of the hive, and at last gather together in a cluster upon the stool, he may call his friends together, to behold his increasing store, as he may depend that they will swarm immediately." —BONNAR.

" Before bees swarm the second or third time, they do not lie out in clusters about the hive or upon the stool; but as soon as they are ready, they come off in a body, even in weather that is by no means favourable. The signs, when these after-swarms will come off, are more certain than those that precede the first swarming; for, if the weather be good, one may almost prognosticate the very hour. By listening at night to the sound of a hive, about eight, ten, or twelve days after the first swarm is gone off, that peculiar sound,

commonly called *tolling*, will be easily distinguished. This sound seems to be the royal proclamation issued by the young princess, to warn, or rather to invite, her fellow-emigrants to prepare for their intended journey. It sounds, says one, as if the words *peep! peep! peep!* were rapidly pronounced fifteen or twenty times in half a minute. She then stops, and begins again repeatedly, like a chicken peeping for its mother, when it has lost her."---BONNAR.

## Note VI.

———————*Haste, spread the sheet, and lay*
*Two rods of mountain-ash along, &c.*----P. 137.

"As soon as they alight on any thing, that can easily be brought to the ground, such as the small branch of a tree, or a berry-bush, or the like, let a sheet be spread on the ground near the swarm, and two sticks placed upon it, a foot asunder. Then place the swarm upon the sheet, between the sticks, and gently cover it with a hive, resting the edges of the hive upon the sticks, to prevent it from crushing any of the bees; who will thus have free air, and access to and from the hive, which must be covered with a cloth, to prevent the rays of the sun from scorching the bees, and provoking them to rise and seek out a more comfortable habitation. If their new lodging pleases them, they will take immediate possession, and fall to work with alacrity."

BONNAR.

## Note VII.

*———————Closely they entomb*
*In catacomb, as in his pristine shell.*———P. 138.

I never witnessed this circumstance myself. I state it on the authority of a lady, whose veracity is as unquestionable as her genius.

## Note VIII.

*When Summer's blow of flowers begins to fade,*
*Some to the moorlands bear their hives, to cull*
*The treasures of the heathbell.*—P. 139.

"About Lammas, those who live in situations where the vegetation is early over, especially if possessed of a large number of hives, ought to remove their bees to the neighbourhood of heath grounds, if they should even be six or eight miles distant, and allow them to continue in that situation till the heath gives over blossoming. This measure I would earnestly recommend, as the bees, after having had all the advantage of their early situations, will work as late in the season, as those in the latest situations. I have often seen a hive, by being placed nigh heath, become ten, twelve,

or fifteen pounds heavier in the month of August; whereas if it had remained in its original early situation, it would probably have become every day lighter after Lammas. The only risk in this case is, that if the weather turn out bad in August, the bee-master will lose all his trouble; but contingencies of this kind happen in every other business in which mankind engage; which, nevertheless, do not deter us from adventuring."

"I can assure my readers, that, in the middle of September 1792, I have seen bees in such situations, filling their hives with combs and honey, as plentifully and as expeditiously as if it had been the middle of June. In the beginning of September that year, I purchased, for a gentleman in Northumberland, a considerable number of hives, that were only about half full of combs when placed in his apiary; but the heath in his grounds being extremely rich and in full blossom, the bees were so expeditious in their labours, that they filled the hives completely with both combs and honey, within a week thereafter."—BONNAR.

## Note IX.

*If e'er disease assail the humming race.*——P. 140.

This and the twenty-five subsequent lines are, with some variations, a translation of the passage in the 4th Georgic, beginning with the lines,

> Si vero, quoniam casus apibus quoque nostros
> Vita tulit, tristi languebunt corpora morbo.
>
> l. 250, 251.

As a curiously bad specimen of what, notwithstanding the high name of the translator, I hold to be a very miserable translation, I will here add Dryden's version of the passage alluded to :

> " But since they share with man one common fate,
> In health and sickness, and in turns of state;
> Observe the symptoms when they *fall away,*
> And languish with insensible decay.
> They change their hue, with *haggard eyes* they stare,
> Lean are their looks, and SHAGGED *is their hair:*
> And crowds of dead that never must return
> To their loved hives, in decent pomp are borne;
> Their *friends attend the hearse,* the *next relations mourn.*
> The sick for air, before the portal, gasp,
> Their feeble legs within each other clasp;

Or idle in their empty hives remain,
Benumb'd with cold, and *listless of their gain.*
Soft whispers then, and broken sounds are heard,
As when the woods by gentle winds are stirred.
Such stifled noise as the close furnace hides,
Or dying murmurs of departing tides.
This when thou see'st, Galbanean odours use,
And honey in the sickly hive *infuse.*
Through reeden pipes convey the golden flood,
T' invite the *people* to their wonted food.
Mix it with thickened juice of *sodden* wines,
And raisins from the grapes of Psythian vines :
To these add pounded galls, and roses dry,
And with Cecropian thyme, strong-scented centaury.

A flower there is, that grows on meadow-ground,
Amellus called, and easy to be found ;
For from one root the rising stem *bestows*
A wood of leaves, and vi'let purple boughs :
The flower itself is glorious to behold,
And shines on altars like refulgent gold :
Sharp to the taste, by shepherds near the stream
Of Mella found, and thence they gave the name ;
Boil this restoring root in gen'rous wine,
And set beside the door, the sickly stock *to dine.*"

## Note X.

*And did the sage, whose powerful genius shed*
*A flood of light, where only glimmering rays, &c.*—P. 143.

Till Dr Currie of Liverpool published his book on Fevers, the external application of cold water, as a remedy in fevers, was used with a very timid hand. If he was not absolutely the discoverer of this remedy, he was at least the first physician who discovered the proper modes and times of its application, and who demonstrated, by a series of observations, and a train of ingenious and conclusive argument, that it was equally safe and efficacious.

# NOTES ON AUGUST.

## Note I.

*Sweet is the falling of the single voice,*
*And sweet the joining of the choral swell.*—P. 151.

" Such have I heard, in Scottish land,
Rise from the busy harvest band,
When falls before the mountaineer,
On lowland plains, the ripened ear.
Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,
Now a wild chorus swells the song:
Oft have I listened, and stood still,
As it came softened up the hill,
And deemed it the lament of men
Who languished for their native glen;
And thought, how sad would be such sound,
On Susquehanna's swampy ground,
Kentucky's wood-encumbered brake,
Or wild Ontario's boundless lake,
Where heart-sick exiles, in the strain,
Recalled fair Scotland's hills again!"

MARMION.

## Note II.

———————*A mildew creeps*
*Along the wheaten ridge, blighting the ears;*
*Haste, then, the sickle urge, &c.*———P. 153.

"Be very attentive to the wheat crops this month: they are every where liable to this fatal distemper, which admits but of one cure or check, and that is, reaping it as soon as it is struck. The capital managers in Suffolk know well, that every hour the wheat stands after the mildew appears is mischievous to the crop. It should be cut, though quite green, as it is found that the grain fills after it is cut, and ripens in a manner that those would not conceive who have not tried the experiment, which I have done many times; reaping so early, that the labourers pronounced I should have nothing but hens meat. They were always mistaken, for the sample proved good, while others, who left it longer, suffered severely. The fact is now pretty generally known and admitted."—YOUNG's *Farmer's Calendar*.

## Note III.

*No sign of gathering storms, both wind and rain,*
*Is surer than the sea-fowl's inland flight.*—P. 155.

" Quum medio celeres revolant ex æquore mergi."
*Georg.* IV. l. 361.

———————" The cormorant on high
Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land."
THOMSON.

## Note IV.

*How richly fraught with vegetable food*
*The stream subsides upon the deluged plain.*—P. 158.

———————" Quique paludis
Collectum humorem bibulâ deducit arenâ,
Præsertim incertis si mensibus amnis abundans
Exit, et obducto latè tenet omnia limo,
Unde cavæ tepido sudant humore lacunæ?"
*Georg.* I. l. 113.

" And drains the standing waters, when they yield
Too large a beverage to the drunken field.
But most in autumn, and the showery spring,
When dubious months uncertain weather bring;

When fountains open, when impetuous rain
Swells hasty brooks, and pours upon the plain;
When Earth with slime and mud is covered o'er,
Or hollow places spew their watery store."

DRYDEN'S *Translation.*

The different ways in which a farmer may avail himself of the earthy substances deposited by rivers are various, according to the situation and form of his grounds. For a description of *warping*, or the art of embanking rivers into which the tide flows, in such a manner as to retain the deposit of the spring tides, I refer the reader to the head *Warping*, under the article *Agriculture*, in the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*. On the banks of rivers where warping cannot be practised, the methods which I have hinted at in the text may, perhaps, be found useful in securing a part of that fertilizing deposit which almost every overflowing river leaves.

## Note V.

———————*Every sluggish ditch,*
*And stagnant puddle, during summer heats,*
*Is bottomed with a fertilizing layer.*——P. 159.

"This (the cleaning out of ponds) is a part of husbandry too much neglected by many farmers; but advantage should always be taken of it by a good husbandman, when he is

lucky enough to succeed a great sloven; for then he will probably find all ponds, &c. full of rich mud.

"It is improbable that pond mud, especially if there is a stream into the water, should ever fail of proving a good manure, when judiciously used."—YOUNG's *Farmer's Calendar.*

## Note VI.

*Britannia, to thy richest treasures blind,*
*Treasures that team in river, frith, and sea,—*
*Why sleep thy laws?*————————P. 161.

The theme of the British, and especially the Scottish fisheries, though thoroughly hacknied, is nevertheless a most important one. It is not the less important, that the opinions of writers on political economy, and the firm conviction of the people at large, have produced little else than neglect on the part of Government, or, what is worse, a mixture of wise and foolish regulations, in which the foolish greatly preponderate. The most neglected spot of the British dominions is the Shetland and Orkney isles. For a description of the miserable and grinding vassalage under which the inhabitants (who are almost all fishermen) of these islands exist, I refer the reader to a Tour through some of these islands by Mr Patrick Neill. In this little book, which was violently, but impotently, attacked by some of the

Shetland landholders, or rather slave-holders, there is a great deal of useful information, to which it would be well if some attention were paid by those who have the power to rectify abuses. While the conquest of a pestilential island on the other side of the Atlantic costs the nation thousands of lives, and millions of money, the northern and western islands of Scotland, which are *demonstrated* to be encircled with a rich and inexhaustible mine of national wealth and strength, lie almost neglected. The sums applied out of the prices of the forfeited estates, towards the improvement of the fisheries, are a mere *sprinkling*, a *drop* in the bucket. To do any good, extensive tracts of the islands and of the shores of the Highland mainland, ought to be purchased by Government, on the same principles, and according to the same regulations, as lands are purchased for canals or roads. These domains ought to be parcelled out in small portions of two or three acres, more or less according to the quality of the ground; a small house should be erected on each parcel, and these little properties should be *given* in perpetuity to tenants or cottars, who have been turned out of their possessions. The way to make the seas productive is to make the shores populous, and for this purpose nothing can be so effectual as encouraging settlers with a gift of land. All other bounties are useless. If some such plan had been adopted twenty years ago, the miserable exiles from the Highlands and islands, instead of being under the necessity of transporting themselves to America, or indenting themselves at Cottonmills, would have been covering the shores of their native country with a happy and virtuous popula-

tion. As to expence, the cost of one of our expeditions would have defrayed it ten times over.

## Note VII.

*How sweet, o'er Scotia's hill-encircled seas.*—P. 161.

> " Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode,
> To his hills that encircle the sea."
>
> CAMPBELL.

# NOTES ON SEPTEMBER.

## Note I.

———————*While they draw,*
*Close to the ground, the sickle, &c.*—P. 167.

The advantage of cutting close is obvious; but the extent of the advantage is not always duly estimated. An inch is the 24th part of a stalk two feet in height. Of course, every inch that is saved by close cutting adds on a field (the stalk of which is, on an average, two feet in height), a 24th part more straw. Three inches saved would make an addition of one threave in eight. Besides, the lower part of the stalk is the thickest, as well as the most succulent.

## Note II.

*A row of forked stakes draw cross the field, &c.*—P. 170.

In the Highlands, where the rain sometimes falls without intermission for a fortnight or three weeks, drying-houses, like those at Inveraray, may be useful. But wherever there are fair intervals now and then, the process of drying may be performed more effectually, rapidly, and cheaply, in the open air, than in drying-houses. It is obvious, that in any house, however open it may be *laterally*, though the current of air passing through it may seem to be more violent than the wind on the outside, yet, as the corn placed in it must be completely covered by the roof, the evaporation cannot be there so quick as in the open air. In a drying-house, completely roofed, and partially covered at the sides, sifting winds will be felt; but under the canopy of the sky, where the evaporating moisture is carried off upward as well as horizontally, an hour of fair weather will do more to dry a sheaf of corn, than two hours of the sifting winds of a drying-house. As to the expence of the mode of suspending the sheaves in the open air, there can be no doubt that it would be very trifling.

## Note III.

*————————O grand emprize ! O generous boon !*
*That little book to Scotia's farthest isles,*
*In each low cottage, comfort speaks and peace.*—P. 172.

The translation of the Bible into the Gaelic language is a work which does honour to the present age; and yet the undertaking appears at one time to have been opposed by some of the members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The spirit which must have dictated this opposition, and which still opposes the diffusion of the means of knowledge to the lower orders of society, is so *admirably* exposed by Dr Johnson, in a letter recorded by Mr Boswell, that I will here quote it. " It is addressed (Mr Boswell mentions) to the late Mr William Drummond, bookseller in Edinburgh, a gentleman of good family but small estate, who took arms for the house of Stuart in 1745; and during his concealment in London, till the act of general pardon came out, obtained the acquaintance of Dr Johnson, who justly esteemed him as a very worthy man." It is as follows:

" Sir---I did not expect to hear that it could be, in an assembly convened for the propagation of Christian knowledge, a question, Whether any nation, uninstructed in religion, should receive instruction; or, whether that instruc-

tion should be imparted to them by a translation of the holy books into their own language. If obedience to the will of God be necessary to happiness, and knowledge of his will be necessary to obedience, I know not how he that withholds this knowledge, or delays it, can be said to love his neighbour as himself. He, that voluntarily continues ignorance, is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces; as to him, that should extinguish the tapers of a lighthouse, might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwrecks. Christianity is the highest perfection of humanity; and as no man is good but as he wishes the good of others, no man can be good in the highest degree, who wishes not to others the largest measure of the greatest good. To omit for a year, or for a day, the most efficacious method of advancing Christianity, in compliance with any purposes that terminate on this side of the grave, is a crime of which I know not that the world has yet had an example, except in the practice of the planters of America, a race of mortals whom, I suppose, no other man wishes to resemble.

"The papists have indeed denied to the laity the use of the Bible; but this prohibition, in few places now very rigorously enforced, is defended by arguments which have for their foundation the care of souls. To obscure, upon motives merely political, the light of revelation, is a practice reserved for the reformed; and surely the blackest midnight of popery is meridian sunshine to such a reformation. I am not very willing that any language should be totally extinguished. The similitude and derivation of languages

afford the most indubitable proof of the traduction of nations and the genealogy of mankind. They add often physical certainty to historical evidence; and often supply the only evidence of ancient migrations, and of the revolutions of ages which left no written monuments behind them.

" Every man's opinions, at least his desires, are a little influenced by his favourite studies. My zeal for languages may seem, perhaps, rather overheated, even to those by whom I desire to be well esteemed. To those who have nothing in their thoughts but trade or policy, present power, or present money, I should not think it necessary to defend my opinions; but with men of letters I would not unwillingly compound, by wishing the continuance of every language, however narrow in its extent, or however uncommodious for common purposes, till it is reposited in some version of a known book, that it may be always hereafter examined and compared with other languages, and then permitting its disuse. For this purpose the translation of the Bible is most to be desired. It is not certain that the same method will not preserve the Highland language, for the purposes of learning, and abolish it from daily use. When the Highlanders read the Bible, they will naturally wish to have its obscurities cleared, and to know the history collateral or appendant. Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterwards propagate itself. When they once desire to learn, they will naturally have recourse to the nearest language by which that desire can be gratified; and one will tell another, that, if he would attain knowledge, he must learn English.

" This speculation may perhaps be thought more subtle than the grossness of real life will easily admit. *Let it, however, be remembered, that the efficacy of ignorance has been long tried, and has not produced the consequence expected. Let knowledge therefore take its turn; and let the patrons of privation stand awhile aside, and admit the operation of positive principles.*

" You will be pleased, sir, to assure the worthy man who is employed in the new translation, that he has my wishes for his success; and if here, or at Oxford, I can be of any use, that I shall think it more than honour to promote his undertaking. I am, &c."

# NOTES ON OCTOBER.

## Note I.

———*How ceaseless is the round*
*Of rural labour! soon as on the field, &c.*—P. 187.

———" Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem,
Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus."
*Georg.* IV. l. 101.

## Note II.

*The bristling piny tribes, &c.*——P. 192.

I have heard people talk of the *foliage* of the pine. Now to me it seems as absurd to give the prickles (or, as children very properly term them, the needles and pins,) of fir-trees the name of leaves, as it would be to call the *tops* or *cones*, *fruit*. These prickles are, to be sure, all that the pine has for leaves; but that does not make them leaves. Some

African birds are covered entirely with hair; yet no one ever thought of calling that hair feathers. For my own part, I think it would not be more absurd to talk of the *plumage* on the back of a hog, than it is to say that the branches of pines are clothed with *foliage*.

## Note III.

*Draw them in rows along the bounding line.*—P. 193.

A hedge of closely planted firs is an excellent weather-fence for young plantations of white wood trees. It is from the lateral force of the wind that young trees require to be protected. The freer they are all above, so much the better. In large plantations, that are much exposed, bounding hedges of firs will not be sufficient. Crossing rows here and there may be necessary. Such rows do all that is necessary for *sheltering* plantations, while they have no tendency to stifle the trees of slower growth. It may here be observed, that a tree which has been marred or dwarfed in its growth, by being overtopped by other trees, very seldom recovers its health. It remains a poor ill-thriven plant.

## Note IV.

———————*Improvers, some there are,*
*Enamoured of deformity and gloom,*
*Who strangely deem they beautify the land*
*By planting woods of pine.*—P. 194.

To persons infected with the *mania* for pines, the following observations, by one of the best judges of picturesque beauty, may be of use:

" The trees which principally shewed themselves were larches; and, from the multitude of their sharp points, the whole country appeared *en herisson*, and had much the same degree of resemblance to natural scenery, that one of the old military plans, with scattered platoons of spearmen, has to a print after Claude or Poussin.

" A planter wishes very naturally to produce some appearance of wood as soon as possible: He therefore sets his trees very close together; and so they generally remain, for his paternal fondness will seldom allow him to thin them sufficiently. They are consequently all drawn up together, nearly to the same height; and, as their heads touch each other, no variety, no distinction of form, can exist, but the whole is one enormous, unbroken, unvaried mass of black. Its appearance is so uniformly dead and heavy, that instead

of those cheering ideas, which arise from the fresh and luxuriant foliage, and the lighter tints of deciduous trees, it has something of that dreary image, that extinction of form and colour, which Milton felt from blindness; when he, who had viewed objects with a painter's eye, as he described them with a poet's fire, was

> "Presented with an universal blank
> Of Nature's works."

"It must be considered also, that the eye feels an impression from objects analogous to that of weight, as appears from the expression, a *heavy* colour, a *heavy* form; hence arises the necessity, in all landscapes, of preserving a proper balance of both; and this is a very principal part of the art of painting. If, in a picture, the one half were to be light and airy, both in the forms and in the tints, and the other half one black heavy lump, the most ignorant person would probably be displeased (though he might not know upon what principle) with the want of *balance*, and of harmony; for those harsh discordant effects not only act more forcibly from being brought together within a small compass, but also because, in painting, they are not authorised by fashion, or rendered familiar by custom."

PRICE's *Essay on the Picturesque.*

## Note V.

*And, with their poisonous drop, the primrose wan, &c.*—P. 194.

"The inside of these plantations fully answers to the dreary appearance of the outside. Of all dismal scenes, it seems to me the most likely for a man to hang himself in: he would, however, find some difficulty in the execution; for, amidst the endless multitude of stems, there is rarely a single side-branch to which a rope could be fastened. The whole wood is a collection of tall naked poles, with a few ragged boughs near the top:—above, one uniform rusty cope, seen through decayed and decaying sprays and branches;---below, *the soil parched and blasted with the baleful droppings; hardly a plant or a blade of grass; nothing that can give an idea of life or vegetation.* Even its gloom is without solemnity; it is only dull and dismal, and what light there is, like that of hell,

> "Serves only to discover scenes of woe,
> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades."

PRICE.

## Note VI.

———*The alder, too, prefers*
*A station dank.*—P. 196.

" There are a sort of husbands who take excessive pain in stubbing up their alders, wherever they meet them in the boggy places of their ground, with the same indignation as one would extirpate the most pernicious of weeds; and when they have finished, know not how to convert their best lands to more profit than this (seeming despicable) plant might lead them to, were it rightly understood."

EVELYN *on Forest Trees*, p. 99.

## Note VII.

*No tree bears transplantation like the elm.*——P. 196.

" Of all the trees which grow in our woods, there is none that does better suffer the transplantation than the elm; for you may remove a tree of twenty years growth with undoubted success."---EVELYN.

In transplantation, it is of great importance that the tree be placed precisely in the situation, with respect to the

points of the compass, in which it stood before it was removed. This rule is spoken of by Lord Kames, as proved by experience to be useless. I would trust, however, as much to Virgil's opinion on trees, as to that of Lord Kames, especially as he assigns a good reason for the rule:

> "Quinetiam cœli regionem in cortice signant,
> Ut quo quæque modo steterit, quâ parte calores
> Austrinos tulerit, quæ terga oberterit axi,
> Restituant: adeo in teneris consuescere multum est."
>
> *Georg.* II. l. 272.

> "Beside, to plant it as it was, they mark
> The heavens' four quarters in the tender bark;
> And to the north or south restore the side,
> Which at their birth did heat or cold abide:
> So strong is custom; such effects can use
> In tender souls of pliant plants produce."
>
> DRYDEN'S *Translation.*

It is true that Virgil is here treating of vines; but the reason of the thing is equally applicable to other trees; and the practice as to trees in general is supported by the high authority of Evelyn:

"For as the southern parts being more dilated, and the pores exposed (as evidently appears in their horizontal sections) by the constant eccentricity of the hyperbolical circles of all trees, (save just under the equator, where the circles

concentre, as we find in those hard woods which grow there) ours, being now on the sudden, and at such a season converted to the north, does starve and destroy more trees (how careful soever men have been in ordering the roots, and preparing the ground,) than any other accident whatsoever, neglect of staking and defending from cattle excepted."—

EVELYN, p. 31.

## Note VIII.

*And now they bear the woodland harvest home,*
*And store it up for blythesome Hallowe'en.*—P. 199.

I hope I shall not be accused of presumption, in touching on a subject already so admirably and so fully treated by Burns. I conceived that a poem, partly descriptive of rural manners, would have been materially defective, without some notice of *Halloween:* and I am little moved by that sort of pride which shrinks from a contrast with unrivalled excellence. I pretend not to enter the lists with Burns; but I do not consider, as sacred and unapproachable ground, every scene which he has immortalized in his poetic landscapes.

## Note IX.

*A few dim candles in derision shine*
*Of Romish rites, now happily forgot.*—P. 200.

Dr Jamieson traces the superstitious observances of Halloween to a heathen origin; and I agree with him to a certain extent. At the same time, I have no doubt that the particular custom adverted to in the text, was intended as a piece of mockery of those Romish processions by torch and candle light, which the first reformers used every method to ridicule. On this subject, the tradition of the west of Scotland is universal and explicit; and it will be observed that the period to which this tradition relates is not very remote.

## Note X.

*Then round the fire, full many a cottage ring*
*Cheerful convenes, to burn the boding nuts.*——P. 200.

"Burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lass and the lad to each particular nut, as they lay them on the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be."—*Notes to* BURNS's *Halloween.*

## Note XI.

*Plunging, to catch the floating fruit, that still*
*Eludes the attempt.*——P. 201.

Ducking to catch an apple floating in water, produces much unsuccessful and ludicrous stretching of the jaws.

## Note XII.

————*Nor is the triple spell*
*Of dishes, ranged to cheat the groping hand,*
*Forgot.*——P. 201.

"Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, and leave the third empty: blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered."—*Notes to Halloween.*

The following stanza, descriptive of this custom, places before the mind, not merely the facts as they happen, but the looks, gestures, and feelings of the actor:

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The luggies three are ranged,
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,
To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' Mar's year did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
He heaved them on the fire
In wrath that night.

# NOTES ON NOVEMBER.

## Note I.

———————*But beware*
*Of clipping close the fetlock.*—P. 208.

It is strange how far the docking, shaving, paring, and clipping system is carried. While it is confined to the mane, the ears, or even the tail, it is of minor consequence; but when Art comes to make alterations on the legs or feet of a horse, she ought to proceed with caution. The old mode of over-paring the hoofs is now exploded; but the practice of clipping the fetlock is still in full vigour with respect to coach-horses. Indeed the whole pastern joint round and round is clipped close to the skin. The consequence is, that the skin is exposed to the actual contact of the mud and clay. Now every one knows how much clay, or any other adhesive substance, frets and irritates the skin. Any adhesive substance drying and encrusting on the skin, is in

fact a kind of blister. It may not, indeed, raise the cuticle, but it certainly produces soreness and scabs. It has, besides, the effect of converting the hairs into bristles; the consequence of which is, that every time the heels are rubbed the roots of the hair act as a kind of prickles on the most sensitive part of the frame, viz. the sub-cuticle. In short, the very important office which the skin performs is marred, and the consequence generally is greasy and swelled heels.

But the actual application of the shears to the joint is seldom confined to the hair. Careless or drunken grooms generally contrive to take in, now and then, a bit of the skin.

## Note II.

*The reeling compass.*—P. 212.

That, in thunder storms, the compass sometimes loses its polarity, is a well known fact.

## Note III.

*Hence Irrigation's power at first was learnt;*
*A custom ancient, yet but rarely used*
*In cold and watery climes.*—P. 214.

The practice of irrigation is very ancient, and seems not to have been confined to grass-fields, or rather it seems to have been confined to corn-fields:

"Deinde *satis* * fluvium inducit rivosque sequentes;
Et quum exustus ager morientibus æstuat herbis,
Ecce, supercilio clivosi tramitis undam
Elicit: illa cadens raucum per levia murmur
Saxa ciet, scatebrisque arentia temperat arva."
*Georg.* I. l. 110.

The immense benefit to be derived from irrigation, compared with the cost and trouble, is very succinctly pointed out by Mr Singers, in his report made to the Highland Society concerning the watered meadows on or near the rivers Esk, Ewes, &c. from which the following are extracts:

"If the changes incurred, in the mechanical department of the formation of all these meadows, be stated at five

* Among the ancients the word *sata* never signified fields sown with grass.

pounds per acre, it is probably not far from the average. There have been some which have risen to seven pounds, when there was much cart and spade work to do; while others have been laid out at a very low rate.

" The annual returns at present may be safely estimated at 150 stone of hay, of 24 lib. avoirdupois in the stone, for every English acre of meadow. Some of them rise above 200 stone, and others fall as low as 100 stone, or even less, being as yet unproductive, in consequence of unfavourable circumstances. But the average return probably rises above. It must be remembered, however, that the returns of these meadows do not consist wholly of hay. I am disposed to think, that the returns in pasture, exclusive of the hay, do not in general fall short of the full value of the soil in its original unimproved state."

" The annual expences incurred in keeping up the works on these meadows, may be considered, at an average, about 5s. per acre."

" The expence of laying out and inclosing these meadows is the principal obstacle. But when this expence is moderate, and the meadow succeeds well, a single year's crop, almost, or entirely, defrays the charges. When matters are less favourable, they may still be liquidated in two or three seasons. And when the expence is very low, the first year more than pays it; as must have been the case in various instances, where these meadows were done in catch-work, and succeeded well. But if the forming and inclosing should not be fully compensated in less than four or five years,

there is reason still to expect that the tenant will be reimbursed.

" The attention which becomes necessary to the watered meadows in upholding them, and conducting the watering process, is mentioned as an incumbrance. I admit the fact, but what does the farmer obtain without attention? Let him consider the pains and trouble he must undergo in manuring, fallowing, sowing, and reaping, from arable soils; and in preserving and bringing into use the respective crops which he raises from them. But with respect to watered meadows, if a few of them are situated contiguous to each other, a common labourer, employed to uphold and water them all, effectually removes this difficulty; and in other cases, a common farm-servant will very soon learn to attend to the ordinary matters that require his notice."

" But the profit (says Arthur Young,) of irrigating dry slopes of sand and gravel, &c. and poor dry ling moors, is immense. The expence is comparatively trifling, and the improvement beyond conception. Such lands may be raised from 2s. or 3s. an acre, to 40s. or 50s."

*Farmer's Callendar.*

## Note IV.

*Some level fields, through all the winter months,*
*Are covered warmly with a watery sheet.*—P. 218.

" In this month you begin to winter-water the meadows and pastures wherever it can be done; and be assured that no improvement will pay better: a winter's watering will answer in the hay fully equal to a common manuring of the best stuff you can lay on the land; and the expence in some situations is trifling."

" It is necessary, however, every ten days or fortnight, to give the land air, and to lay it as dry as possible, for the space of a few days. Whenever the frost has given a complete sheet of ice to a meadow, it is adviseable to discontinue floating, for the frost will sometimes take such strong hold of the land as to draw it into heaps, and injure the evenness of the surface."---YOUNG's *Farmer's Callendar.*

# NOTES ON DECEMBER.

## Note I.

*Foes of the insect race, through every change,*
*The embryotic egg, &c.*—P. 227.

" Most of the smaller birds are supported, especially when young, by a profusion of caterpillars, small worms, and insects, with which every part of the vegetable world abounds; which is by this means preserved from total destruction, contrary to the commonly received opinion, that birds, particularly sparrows, do much mischief in destroying the labours of the gardener and the husbandman. It has been observed, ' that a single pair of sparrows, during the time they are feeding their young, will destroy about four thousand caterpillars weekly; they likewise feed their young with butterflies and other winged insects, each of which, if not destroyed in this manner, would be productive of several hundreds of caterpillars.' Swallows are almost continually upon the

wing, and, in their curious winding flights, destroy immense quantities of flies and other insects, which are continually floating in the air, and which, if not destroyed by these birds, would render it unfit for the purposes of life and health. That active little bird, the tomtit, which is generally supposed hostile to the young and tender buds that appear in the spring, when attentively observed, may be seen running up and down amongst the branches, and picking the small worms that are concealed in the blossoms, and which would effectually destroy the fruit. As the season advances, various other small birds, such as the redbreast, wren, winter fauvette or hedge-sparrow, white-throat, redstart, &c. are all engaged in the same useful work, and may be observed examining every leaf, and feeding upon the insects which they find beneath them. These are a few instances of that superintending providential care, which is continually exerted in preserving the various ranks and orders of beings in the scale of animated nature; and although it is permitted that myriads of individuals should every moment be destroyed, not a single species is lost, but every link of the great chain remains unbroken."---Bewick.

## Note II.

*Who see their halls with happy faces thronged,*
*The rich, the poor, the old and young, all joined*
*In social harmony.*--P. 233.

" Then opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride."

. . . . .

" All hailed with uncontrouled delight,
And general voice the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.

The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board,
No mark to part the squire and lord."

MARMION. *Introd. to Canto VI.*

## Note III.

*Of all the festive nights which customs old,*
*And waning fast, have made the poor man's own,*
*The merriest of them all is Hoggmanay.*—P. 233.

In Scotland the last night of the year is called *Hogmanay*, most frequently pronounced *hockmanay*. For an ingenious account of the origin of this name, see Dr Jamieson's Dictionary.

## Note IV.

————*No dread is now*
*Of walking wraith, or witch, or cantrip fell.*—P. 234.

"*Wraith*, properly an apparition in the exact likeness of a person; supposed by the vulgar to be seen before or soon after death."—JAMIESON.

"*Cantrip*, a charm, a spell, an incantation."—JAMIESON.

## Note V.

*With smutted visages, from house to house,*
*In country and in town, the guisarts range.*—P. 234.

"*Gyser, gysard*, a harlequin; a term applied to those who disguise themselves about the time of the new year."---JAMIESON.

"Whan gloamin gray comes from the east,
Through a' the *gysarts* venture,
In sarks and paper helmets drest."——NICOL's *Poems*.

"The custom of disguising now remains only among boys and girls, some of whom wear marks, and others blacken their faces with soot. They go from door to door, singing carols that have some relation to the season, and asking money or bread, superior in quality to that used on ordinary occasions."---JAMIESON.

On first coming to a door, they cry or chaunt,

Hogmenay Trololay,
Give us your white bread,
And none of your gray.

## Note VI.

*And sing their madrigals, though coarse and rude,*
*With willing glee, that penetrates the heart.* P. 235.

"Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blythesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made."

MARMION, *Introd. to Canto VI.*

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